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The Tragedy of Coriolanus

by William Shakespeare [Collins edition]

November, 1998 [Etext #1535]

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THE TRAGEDY OF CORIOLANUS

by William Shakespeare

PERSONS REPRESENTED.

CAIUS MARCIUS CORIOLANUS, a noble Roman

TITUS LARTIUS, General against the Volscians

COMINIUS, General against the Volscians

MENENIUS AGRIPPA, Friend to Coriolanus

SICINIUS VELUTUS, Tribune of the People

JUNIUS BRUTUS, Tribune of the People

YOUNG MARCIUS, son to Coriolanus

A ROMAN HERALD

TULLUS AUFIDIUS, General of the Volscians

LIEUTENANT, to Aufidius

Conspirators with Aufidius

A CITIZEN of Antium

TWO VOLSCIAN GUARDS

VOLUMNIA, Mother to Coriolanus

VIRGILIA, Wife to Coriolanus

VALERIA, Friend to Virgilia

GENTLEWOMAN attending on Virgilia

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

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

ACT I.

SCENE I. Rome. A street.

[Enter a company of mutinous citizens, with staves, clubs, and  
other weapons.]

FIRST CITIZEN.

Before we proceed any further, hear me speak.

ALL.

Speak, speak.

FIRST CITIZEN.

You are all resolved rather to die than to famish?

ALL.

Resolved, resolved.

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

ALL.

We know't, we know't.

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

ALL.

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

SECOND CITIZEN.

One word, good citizens.

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

SECOND CITIZEN.

Would you proceed especially against Caius Marcius?

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

SECOND CITIZEN.

Consider you what services he has done for his country?

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

SECOND CITIZEN.

Nay, but speak not maliciously.

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

SECOND CITIZEN.

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

If I must not, I need not be barren of accusations; he hath faults, with surplus, to tire in repetition. [Shouts within.] What shouts are these? The other side o' the city is risen: why stay we prating here? to the Capitol!

ALL.

Come, come.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Soft! who comes here?

SECOND CITIZEN.

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

He's one honest enough; would all the rest were so!

[Enter MENENIUS AGRIPPA.]

MENENIUS.

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

MENENIUS.

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

We cannot, sir; we are undone already.

MENENIUS.

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

MENENIUS.

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

MENENIUS.

There was a time when all the body's members  
Rebell'd against the belly; thus accus'd 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 th' other instruments  
Did see and hear, devise, instruct, walk, feel,  
And, mutually participate, did minister  
Unto the appetite and affection common  
Of the whole body. The belly answered,--

FIRST CITIZEN.

Well, sir, what answer made the belly?

MENENIUS.

Sir, I shall tell you.--With a kind of smile,  
Which ne'er came from the lungs, but even thus,--  
For, look you, I may make the belly smile  
As well as speak,--it tauntingly replied  
To the discontented members, the mutinous parts  
That envied his receipt; even so most fitly  
As you malign our senators for that  
They are not such as you.

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

MENENIUS.

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

MENENIUS.

Well, what then?

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

MENENIUS.

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

You are long about it.

MENENIUS.

Note me this, good friend;  
Your most grave belly was deliberate,  
Not rash like his accusers, and thus answer'd:  
'True is it, my incorporate friends,' quoth he,  
'That I receive the general food at first  
Which you do live upon; and fit it is,  
Because I am the storehouse and the shop

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

Ay, sir; well, well.

MENENIUS.

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

It was an answer: how apply you this?

MENENIUS.

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

I the great toe? why the great toe?

MENENIUS.

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

[Enter CAIUS MARCIUS.]

Hail, noble Marcius!

MARCIUS.

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

We have ever your good word.

MARCIUS.

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

The other makes you proud. He that trusts to you,  
Where he should find you lions, finds you hares;  
Where foxes, geese: you are no surer, no,  
Than is the coal of fire upon the ic,  
Or hailstone in the sun. Your virtue is  
To make him worthy whose offence subdues him,  
And curse that justice did it. Who deserves greatness  
Deserves your hate; and your affections are  
A sick man's appetite, who desires most that  
Which would increase his evil. He that depends  
Upon your favours swims with fins of lead,  
And hews down oaks with rushes. Hang ye! Trust ye!  
With every minute you do change a mind;  
And call him noble that was now your hate,  
Him vile that was your garland. What's the matter,  
That in these several places of the city  
You cry against the noble senate, who,  
Under the gods, keep you in awe, which else  
Would feed on one another?--What's their seeking?

MENENIUS.

For corn at their own rates; whereof they say  
The city is well stor'd.

MARCIUS.

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

MENENIUS.

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

MARCIUS.

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

MENENIUS.

What is granted them?

MARCIUS.

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

MENENIUS.

This is strange.

MARCIUS.

Go get you home, you fragments!

[Enter a MESSENGER, hastily.]

MESSENGER.

Where's Caius Marcius?

MARCIUS.

Here: what's the matter?

MESSENGER.

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

MARCIUS.

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

[Enter COMINIUS, TITUS LARTIUS, and other SENATORS; JUNIUS BRUTUS  
and SICINIUS VELUTUS.]

FIRST SENATOR.

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

MARCIUS.

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

COMINIUS.

You have fought together.

MARCIUS.

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

FIRST SENATOR.

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

COMINIUS.

It is your former promise.

MARCIUS.

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

TITUS LARTIUS.  
No, Caius Marcius;  
I'll lean upon one crutch and fight with the 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 LARTIUS.  
Lead you on.  
Follow, Cominius; we must follow you;  
Right worthy your priority.

COMINIUS.  
Noble Marcius!

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

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

[Exeunt Senators, COM., MAR, TIT., and MENEN. Citizens steal  
away.]

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

BRUTUS.  
He has no equal.

SICINIUS.  
When we were chosen tribunes for the people,--

BRUTUS.  
Mark'd you his lip and eyes?

SICINIUS.  
Nay, but his taunts!

BRUTUS.  
Being mov'd, he will not spare to gird the gods.

SICINIUS.  
Bemock the modest moon.

BRUTUS.

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

SICINIUS.

Such a nature,  
Tickled with good success, disdains the shadow  
Which he treads on at noon: but I do wonder  
His insolence can brook to be commanded  
Under Cominius.

BRUTUS.

Fame, at the which he aims,--  
In whom already he is well grac'd,--cannot  
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 th' utmost of a man; and giddy censure  
Will then cry out of Marcius 'O, if he  
Had borne the business!'

SICINIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

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

SICINIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

Let's along.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II. Corioli. The Senate House.

[Enter TULLUS AUFIDIUS and certain SENATORS.]

FIRST SENATOR.

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

AUFIDIUS.

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

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

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

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

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

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

ALL.  
The gods assist you!

AUFIDIUS.  
And keep your honours safe!

FIRST SENATOR.  
Farewell.

SECOND SENATOR.  
Farewell.

ALL. Farewell.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III. Rome. An apartmnet in MARCIUS' house.

[Enter VOLUMNIA and VIRGILIA; they sit down on two low stools and sew.]

VOLUMNIA.

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

VIRGILIA.

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

VOLUMNIA.

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

[Enter a GENTLEWOMAN.]

GENTLEWOMAN.

Madam, the Lady Valeria is come to visit you.

VIRGILIA.

Beseech you, give me leave to retire myself.

VOLUMNIA.

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

VIRGILIA.

His bloody brow! O Jupiter, no blood!

VOLUMNIA.

Away, you fool! It more becomes a man  
Than gilt his trophy: the breasts of Hecuba,  
When she did suckle Hector, looked not lovelier  
Than Hector's forehead when it spit forth blood

At Grecian swords contending.--Tell Valeria  
We are fit to bid her welcome.

[Exit GENTLEWOMAN.]

VIRGILIA.  
Heavens bless my lord from fell Aufidius!

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

[Re-enter GENTLEWOMAN, with VALERIA and her Usher.]

VALERIA.  
My ladies both, good-day to you.

VOLUMNIA.  
Sweet madam.

VIRGILIA.  
I am glad to see your ladyship.

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

VIRGILIA.  
I thank your ladyship; well, good madam.

VOLUMNIA.  
He had rather see the swords and hear a drum than look upon his  
schoolmaster.

VALERIA.  
O' my word, the father's son: I'll swear 'tis a very pretty boy.  
O' my troth, I looked upon him o' Wednesday, half an hour  
together: 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 up 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, how he mammoched it!

VOLUMNIA.  
One on's father's moods.

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

VIRGILIA.  
A crack, madam.

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

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

VALERIA.

Not out of doors!

VOLUMNIA.

She shall, she shall.

VIRGILIA.

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

VALERIA.

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

VIRGILIA.

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

VOLUMNIA.

Why, I pray you?

VIRGILIA.

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

VALERIA.

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

VIRGILIA.

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

VALERIA.

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

VIRGILIA.

O, good madam, there can be none yet.

VALERIA.

Verily, I do not jest with you; there came news from him last night.

VIRGILIA.

Indeed, madam?

VALERIA.

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

VIRGILIA.

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

VOLUMNIA.

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

VALERIA.

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

VIRGILIA.

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

VALERIA.

Well then, farewell.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE IV. Before Corioli.

[Enter, with drum and colours, MARCIUS, TITUS LARTIUS, Officers, and soldiers.]

MARCIUS.

Yonder comes news:--a wager they have met.

LARTIUS.

My horse to yours, no.

MARCIUS.

'Tis done.

LARTIUS.

Agreed.

[Enter a Messenger.]

MARCIUS.

Say, has our general met the enemy?

MESSENGER.

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

LARTIUS.

So, the good horse is mine.

MARCIUS.

I'll buy him of you.

LARTIUS.

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

MARCIUS.

How far off lie these armies?

MESSENGER.

Within this mile and half.

MARCIUS.

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

[They sound a parley. Enter, on the Walls, some Senators and others.]

Tullus Aufidius, is he within your walls?

FIRST SENATOR.

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

MARCIUS.

O, they are at it!

LARTIUS.

Their noise be our instruction.--Ladders, ho!

[The Volsces enter and pass over.]

MARCIUS.

They fear us not, but issue forth their city.  
Now put your shields before your hearts, and fight  
With hearts more proof than shields.--Advance, brave Titus:  
They do disdain us much beyond our thoughts,  
Which makes me sweat with wrath.--Come on, my fellows:  
He that retires, I'll take him for a Volsce,  
And he shall feel mine edge.

[Alarums, and exeunt Romeans and Volsces fighting. Romans are beaten back to their trenches. Re-enter MARCIUS.]

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

[Another alarum. The Volsces and Romans re-enter, and the fight

is renewed. The Volsces retire into Corioli, and MARCIUS follows them to the gates.]

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

[He enters the gates]

FIRST SOLDIER.  
Fool-hardiness: not I.

SECOND SOLDIER.  
Nor I.

[MARCUS is shut in.]

FIRST SOLDIER.  
See, they have shut him in.

ALL.  
To th' pot, I warrant him.

[Alarum continues]

[Re-enter TITUS LARTIUS.]

LARTIUS.  
What is become of Marcius?

ALL.  
Slain, sir, doubtless.

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

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

[Re-enter MARCIUS, bleeding, assaulted by the enemy.]

FIRST SOLDIER.  
Look, sir.

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

[They fight, and all enter the city.]

SCENE V. Within Corioli. A street.

[Enter certain Romans, with spoils.]

FIRST ROMAN.

This will I carry to Rome.

SECOND ROMAN.

And I this.

THIRD ROMAN.

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

[Alarum continues still afar off.]

[Enter MARCIUS and TITUS LARTIUS with a trumpet.]

MARCIUS.

See here these movers that do prize their hours  
At a crack'd drachma! Cushions, leaden spoons,  
Irons of a doit, doublets that hangmen would  
Bury with those that wore them, these base slaves,  
Ere yet the fight be done, pack up!--down with them!--  
And hark, what noise the general makes!--To him!--  
There is the man of my soul's hate, Aufidius,  
Piercing our Romans; then, valiant Titus, take  
Convenient numbers to make good the city;  
Whilst I, with those that have the spirit, will haste  
To help Cominius.

LARTIUS.

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

MARCIUS.

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

LARTIUS.

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

MARCIUS.

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

LARTIUS.

Thou worthiest Marcius!--

[Exit MARCIUS.]

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

[Exeunt.]

SCENE VI. Near the camp of COMINIUS.

[Enter COMINIUS and Foreces, retreating.]

COMINIUS.

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

[Enter A MESSENGER.]

Thy news?

MESSENGER.

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

COMINIUS.

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

MESSENGER.

Above an hour, my lord.

COMINIUS.

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

MESSENGER.

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

COMINIUS.

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

MARCIUS.

[Within.] Come I too late?

COMINIUS.

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

[Enter MARCIUS.]

MARCIUS.

Come I too late?

COMINIUS.

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

MARCIUS.

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

COMINIUS.

Flower of warriors,  
How is't with Titus Lartius?

MARCIUS.

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

COMINIUS.

Where is that slave  
Which told me they had beat you to your trenches?  
Where's 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 shunned the cat as they did budge  
From rascals worse than they.

COMINIUS.

But how prevail'd you?

MARCIUS.

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

COMINIUS.

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

MARCIUS.

How lies their battle? know you on which side

They have placed their men of trust?

COMINIUS.

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

MARCIUS.

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

COMINIUS.

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

MARCIUS.

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

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

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

COMINIUS.

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

[Exeunt.]

SCENE VII. The gates of Corioli.

[TITUS LARTIUS, having set a guard upon Corioli, going with drum and trumpet toward COMINIUS and CAIUS MARCIUS, enters with a LIEUTENANT, a party of Soldiers, and a Scout.]

LARTIUS.

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

LIEUTENANT.

Fear not our care, sir.

LARTIUS.

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

[Exeunt.]

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

[Alarum. Enter, from opposite sides, MARCIUS and AUFIDIUS.]

MARCIUS.

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

AUFIDIUS.

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

MARCIUS.

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

AUFIDIUS.

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

MARCIUS.

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

AUFIDIUS.

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

[They fight, and certain Volscies come to the aid of AUFIDIUS.]

Officious, and not valiant,--you have sham'd me  
In your condemned seconds.

[Exeunt fighting, driven in by MAR.]

SCENE IX. The Roman camp.

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

COMINIUS.

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

[Enter TITUS LARTIUS, with his power, from the pursuit.]

LARTIUS.

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

MARCIUS.

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

COMINIUS.

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

MARCIUS.

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

COMINIUS.

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

And tent themselves with death. Of all the horses,--  
Whereof we have ta'en good, and good store,--of all  
The treasure in this field achiev'd and city,  
We render you the tenth; to be ta'en forth  
Before the common distribution at  
Your only choice.

MARCIUS.

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

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

May these same instruments which you profane  
Never sound more! When drums and trumpets shall  
I' the field prove flatterers, let courts and cities be  
Made all of false-fac'd soothing.  
When steel grows soft as the parasite's silk,  
Let him be made a coverture for the wars.  
No more, I say! for that I have not wash'd  
My nose that bled, or foil'd some debile wretch,--  
Which, without note, here's many else have done,--  
You shout me forth in acclamations hyperbolical;  
As if I loved my little should be dieted  
In praises sauc'd with lies.

COMINIUS.

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

[Flourish. Trumpets sound, and drums]

ALL.

Caius Marcius Coriolanus!

CORIOLANUS.

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

COMINIUS.

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

LARTIUS.  
I shall, my lord.

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

COMINIUS.  
Take't: 'tis yours.--What is't?

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

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

LARTIUS.  
Marcius, his name?

CORIOLANUS.  
By Jupiter, forgot:--  
I am weary; yea, my memory is tir'd.--  
Have we no wine here?

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

[Exeunt.]

SCENE X. The camp of the Volsces.

[A flourish. Cornets. Enter TULLUS AUFIDIUS, bloody, with two or three soldiers.]

AUFIDIUS.  
The town is ta'en.

FIRST SOLDIER.  
'Twill be delivered back on good condition.

AUFIDIUS.

Condition!

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

FIRST SOLDIER.  
He's the devil.

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

FIRST SOLDIER.  
Will not you go?

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

FIRST SOLDIER.  
I shall, sir.

[Exeunt.]

ACT II.

SCENE I. Rome. A public place

[Enter MENENIUS, SICINIUS, and BRUTUS.]

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

BRUTUS.  
Good or bad?

MENENIUS.

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

SICINIUS.

Nature teaches beasts to know their friends.

MENENIUS.

Pray you, who does the wolf love?

SICINIUS.

The lamb.

MENENIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

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

MENENIUS.

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

BOTH TRIBUNES.

Well, sir.

MENENIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

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

SICINIUS.

Especially in pride.

BRUTUS.

And topping all others in boasting.

MENENIUS.

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

BOTH TRIBUNES.

Why, how are we censured?

MENENIUS.

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

BOTH TRIBUNES.

Well, well, sir, well.

MENENIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

We do it not alone, sir.

MENENIUS.

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

BOTH TRIBUNES.

What then, sir?

MENENIUS.

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

SICINIUS.

Menenius, you are known well enough too.

MENENIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

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

MENENIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

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

MENENIUS.

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

[Enter VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, VALERIA, &c.]

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

VOLUMNIA.

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

MENENIUS.

Ha! Marcius coming home!

VOLUMNIA.

Ay, worthy Menenius, and with most prosperous approbation.

MENENIUS.

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

VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA.

Nay, 'tis true.

VOLUMNIA.

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

MENENIUS.

I will make my very house reel to-night.--A letter for me?

VIRGILIA.

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

MENENIUS.

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

VIRGILIA.

O, no, no, no.

VOLUMNIA.

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

MENENIUS.

So do I too, if it be not too much.--Brings a victory in his pocket?--The wounds become him.

VOLUMNIA.

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

MENENIUS.

Has he disciplined Aufidius soundly?

VOLUMNIA.

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

MENENIUS.

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

VOLUMNIA.

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

VALERIA.

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

MENENIUS.

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

VIRGILIA.

The gods grant them true!

VOLUMNIA.

True! pow, wow.

MENENIUS.

True! I'll be sworn they are true. Where is he wounded?--[To the TRIBUNES, who come forward.] God save your good worships! Marcius is coming home; he has more cause to be proud.--Where is he wounded?

VOLUMNIA.

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

MENENIUS.

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

VOLUMNIA.

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

MENENIUS.

Now it's twenty-seven: every gash was an enemy's grave.  
[A shout and flourish.]  
Hark! the trumpets.

VOLUMNIA.

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

[A sennet. Trumpets sound. Enter COMINIUS and TITUS LARTIUS;  
between them, CORIOLANUS, crowned with an oaken garland; with  
CAPTAINS and Soldiers and a HERALD.]

HERALD.

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

[Flourish.]

ALL.

Welcome to Rome, renowned Coriolanus!

CORIOLANUS.

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

COMINIUS.

Look, sir, your mother!

CORIOLANUS.

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

[Kneels.]

VOLUMNIA.

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

CORIOLANUS.

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

MENENIUS.

Now the gods crown thee!

CORIOLANUS.

And live you yet? [To VALERIA]--O my sweet lady, pardon.

VOLUMNIA.

I know not where to turn.--O, welcome home;--and welcome,  
general;--and you are welcome all.

MENENIUS.

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

COMINIUS.

Ever right.

CORIOLANUS.

Menenius ever, ever.

HERALD.

Give way there, and go on!

CORIOLANUS.

[To his wife and mother.] Your hand, and yours:  
Ere in our own house I do shade my head,  
The good patricians must be visited;  
From whom I have receiv'd not only greetings,  
But with them change of honours.

VOLUMNIA.

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

CORIOLANUS.

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

COMINIUS.

On, to the Capitol.

[Flourish. Cornets. Exeunt in state, as before. The tribunes remain.]

BRUTUS.

All tongues speak of him and the bleared sights  
Are spectacl'd to see him: your prattling nurse  
Into a rapture lets her baby cry  
While she chats him: the kitchen malkin pins  
Her richest lockram 'bout her reechy neck,  
Clamb'ring the walls to eye him: stalls, bulks, windows,  
Are smother'd up, leads fill'd and ridges hors'd  
With variable complexions; all agreeing  
In earnestness to see him: seld-shown flamens  
Do press among the popular throngs, and puff  
To win a vulgar station: our veil'd dames  
Commit the war of white and damask, in  
Their nicely gawded cheeks, to the wanton spoil  
Of Phoebus' burning kisses; such a pother,

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

SICINIUS.  
On the sudden  
I warrant him consul.

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

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

BRUTUS.  
In that there's comfort.

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

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

SICINIUS.  
'Tis right.

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

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

BRUTUS.  
'Tis most like he will.

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

BRUTUS.  
So it must fall out  
To him or our authorities. For an end,  
We must suggest the people in what hatred  
He still hath held them; that to's power he would

Have made them mules, silenc'd their pleaders, and  
Disproportioned their freedoms; holding them,  
In human action and capacity,  
Of no more soul nor fitness for the world  
Than camels in their war; who have their provand  
Only for bearing burdens, and sore blows  
For sinking under them.

SICINIUS.

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

[Enter A MESSENGER.]

BRUTUS.

What's the matter?

MESSENGER.

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

BRUTUS.

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

SICINIUS.

Have with you.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II. Rome. The Capitol.

[Enter two OFFICERS, to lay cushions.]

FIRST OFFICER.

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

SECOND OFFICER.

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

FIRST OFFICER.

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

SECOND OFFICER.

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

FIRST OFFICER.

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

SECOND OFFICER.

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

FIRST OFFICER.

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

[A sennet. Enter, with Lictors before them, COMINIUS the Consul, MENENIUS, CORIOLANUS, Senators, SICINIUS and BRUTUS. The Senators

take their places; the Tribunes take theirs also by themselves.]

MENENIUS.

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

FIRST SENATOR.

Speak, good Cominius:  
Leave nothing out for length, and make us think  
Rather our state's defective for requital  
Than we to stretch it out.--Masters o' the people,  
We do request your kindest ears; and, after,  
Your loving motion toward the common body,  
To yield what passes here.

SICINIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

Which the rather  
We shall be bless'd to do, if he remember  
A kinder value of the people than  
He hath hereto priz'd them at.

MENENIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

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

MENENIUS.

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

[CORIOLANUS rises, and offers to go away.]

Nay, keep your place.

FIRST SENATOR.

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

CORIOLANUS.

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

BRUTUS.

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

CORIOLANUS.

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

MENENIUS.

Pray now, sit down.

CORIOLANUS.

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

[Exit.]

MENENIUS.

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

COMINIUS.

I shall lack voice: the deeds of Coriolanus  
Should not be utter'd feebly.--It is held  
That valour is the chiefest virtue, and  
Most dignifies the haver: if it be,  
The man I speak of cannot in the world  
Be singly counterpois'd. At sixteen years,  
When Tarquin made a head for Rome, he fought  
Beyond the mark of others; our then dictator,  
Whom with all praise I point at, saw him fight,  
When with his Amazonian chin he drove  
The bristled lips before him: he bestrid  
An o'erpress'd Roman and i' the consul's view  
Slew three opposers: Tarquin's self he met,  
And struck him on his knee: in that day's feats,  
When he might act the woman in the scene,  
He proved best man i' the field, and for his meed  
Was brow-bound with the oak. His pupil age  
Man-enter'd thus, he waxed like a sea;  
And in the brunt of seventeen battles since  
He lurch'd all swords of the garland. For this last,  
Before and in Corioli, let me say,  
I cannot speak him home: he stopp'd the fliers;  
And by his rare example made the coward  
Turn terror into sport: as weeds before  
A vessel under sail, so men obey'd,  
And fell below his stem: his sword,--death's stamp,--  
Where it did mark, it took; from face to foot  
He was a thing of blood, whose every motion  
Was timed with dying cries: alone he enter'd  
The mortal gate of the city, which he painted  
With shunless destiny; aidless came off,  
And with a sudden re-enforcement 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-quick'ned what in flesh was fatigate,  
And to the battle came he; where he did  
Run reeking o'er the lives of men, as if  
'Twere a perpetual spoil: and till we call'd  
Both field and city ours he never stood  
To ease his breast with panting.

MENENIUS.

Worthy man!

FIRST SENATOR.

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

COMINIUS.

Our spoils he kick'd at;  
And looked upon things precious as they were

The common muck of the world: he covets less  
Than misery itself would give; rewards  
His deeds with doing them; and is content  
To spend the time to end it.

MENENIUS.

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

FIRST SENATOR.

Call Coriolanus.

OFFICER.

He doth appear.

[Re-enter CORIOLANUS.]

MENENIUS.

The Senate, Coriolanus, are well pleas'd  
To make thee consul.

CORIOLANUS.

I do owe them still  
My life and services.

MENENIUS.

It then remains  
That you do speak to the people.

CORIOLANUS.

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

SICINIUS.

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

MENENIUS.

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

CORIOLANUS.

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

BRUTUS.

Mark you that?

CORIOLANUS.

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

MENENIUS.

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

SENATORS.

To Coriolanus come all joy and honour!

[Flourish. Exeunt all but SICINIUS and BRUTUS.]

BRUTUS.

You see how he intends to use the people.

SICINIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

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

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III. Rome. The Forum.

[Enter several citizens.]

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

SECOND CITIZEN.

We may, sir, if we will.

THIRD CITIZEN.

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

THIRD CITIZEN.

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

points o' the compass.

SECOND CITIZEN.

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

THIRD CITIZEN.

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

SECOND CITIZEN.

Why that way?

THIRD CITIZEN.

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

SECOND CITIZEN.

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

THIRD CITIZEN.

Are you all resolved to give your voices? But that's no matter, the greater part carries it. I say, if he would incline to the people, there was never a worthier man. Here he comes, and in the gown of humility. Mark his behaviour. We are not to stay all together, but to come by him where he stands, by ones, by twos, and by threes. He's to make his requests by particulars, wherein every one of us has a single honour, in giving him our own voices with our own tongues; therefore follow me, and I'll direct you how you shall go by him.

ALL.

Content, content.

[Exeunt.]

[Enter CORIOLANUS and MENENIUS.]

MENENIUS.

O sir, you are not right; have you not known  
The worthiest men have done't!

CORIOLANUS.

What must I say?--

'I pray, sir'--Plague upon't! I cannot bring  
My tongue to such a pace.--'Look, sir,--my wounds;--  
I got them in my country's service, when  
Some certain of your brethren roar'd, and ran  
From the noise of our own drums.'

MENENIUS.

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

CORIOLANUS.

Think upon me! Hang 'em!  
I would they would forget me, like the virtues

Which our divines lose by 'em.

MENENIUS.

You'll mar all:

I'll leave you. Pray you speak to 'em, I pray you,  
In wholesome manner.

CORIOLANUS.

Bid them wash their faces  
And keep their teeth clean.

[Exit MENENIUS.]

So, here comes a brace:

[Re-enter two citizens.]

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

CORIOLANUS.

Mine own desert.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Your own desert?

CORIOLANUS.

Ay, not mine own desire.

FIRST CITIZEN.

How! not your own desire!

CORIOLANUS.

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

CORIOLANUS.

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

The price is to ask it kindly.

CORIOLANUS.

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

SECOND CITIZEN.

You shall ha' it, worthy sir.

CORIOLANUS.

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

But this is something odd.

SECOND CITIZEN.

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

[Exeunt two citizens.]

[Re-enter other two 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.

THIRD CITIZEN.

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

CORIOLANUS.

Your enigma?

THIRD CITIZEN.

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

CORIOLANUS.

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

FOURTH CITIZEN.

We hope to find you our friend; and therefore give you our voices heartily.

THIRD CITIZEN.

You have received many wounds for your country.

CORIOLANUS.

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

BOTH CITIZENS.

The gods give you joy, sir, heartily!

[Exeunt citizens.]

CORIOLANUS.

Most sweet voices!--  
Better it is to die, better to starve,  
Than crave the hire which first we do deserve.  
Why in this wolvish toge should I stand here,  
To beg of Hob and Dick that do appear,  
Their needless vouches? custom calls me to't!--  
What custom wills, in all things should we do't,  
The dust on antique time would lie unswept,

And mountainous error be too highly heap'd  
For truth to o'erpeer. Rather than fool it so,  
Let the high office and the honour go  
To one that would do thus.--I am half through;  
The one part suffer'd, the other will I do.  
Here come more voices.

[Re-enter other three citizens.]

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

FIFTH CITIZEN.

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

SIXTH CITIZEN.

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

ALL THREE CITIZENS.

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

[Exeunt.]

CORIOLANUS.

Worthy voices!

[Re-enter MENENIUS, with BRUTUS and SICINIUS.]

MENENIUS.

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

CORIOLANUS.

Is this done?

SICINIUS.

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

CORIOLANUS.

Where? at the senate-house?

SICINIUS.

There, Coriolanus.

CORIOLANUS.

May I change these garments?

SICINIUS.

You may, sir.

CORIOLANUS.

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

MENENIUS.

I'll keep you company.--Will you along?

BRUTUS.

We stay here for the people.

SICINIUS.

Fare you well.

[Exeunt CORIOLANUS and MENENIUS.]

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

BRUTUS.

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

[Re-enter citizens.]

SICINIUS.

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

He has our voices, sir.

BRUTUS.

We pray the gods he may deserve your loves.

SECOND CITIZEN.

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

THIRD CITIZEN.

Certainly;  
He flouted us downright.

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

SECOND CITIZEN.

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

SICINIUS.

Why, so he did, I am sure.

CITIZENS.

No, no; no man saw 'em.

THIRD CITIZEN.

He said he had wounds, which he could show in private;  
And with his hat, thus waving it in scorn,  
'I would be consul,' says he; 'aged custom  
But by your voices, will not so permit me;  
Your voices therefore:' when we granted that,

Here was, 'I thank you for your voices,--thank you,--  
Your most sweet voices:--now you have left your voices  
I have no further with you:'--was not this mockery?

SICINIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

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

SICINIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

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

SICINIUS.

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

THIRD CITIZEN.

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

SECOND CITIZEN.

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

BRUTUS.

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

SICINIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

Lay  
A fault on us, your tribunes; that we labour'd,--  
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,  
Pre-occupied with what you rather must do  
Than what you should, made you against the grain  
To voice him consul. Lay the fault on us.

BRUTUS.

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

SICINIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

Say you ne'er had done't,--

Harp on that still,--but by our putting on:  
And presently when you have drawn your number,  
Repair to the Capitol.

CITIZENS.

We will so; almost all  
Repent in their election.

[Exeunt.]

BRUTUS.

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

SICINIUS.

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

[Exeunt.]

ACT III.

SCENE I. Rome. A street

[Cornets. Enter CORIOLANUS, MENENIUS, COMINIUS, TITUS LARTIUS,  
Senators, and Patricians.]

CORIOLANUS.

Tullus Aufidius, then, had made new head?

LARTIUS.

He had, my lord; and that it was which caus'd  
Our swifter composition.

CORIOLANUS.

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

COMINIUS.

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

CORIOLANUS.

Saw you Aufidius?

LARTIUS.

On safeguard he came to me; and did curse  
Against the Volsces, for they had so vilely  
Yielded the town; he is retir'd to Antium.

CORIO LANUS.  
Spoke he of me?

LARTIUS.  
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  
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,  
To oppose his hatred fully.--Welcome home. [To Laertes.]

[Enter SICINIUS and BRUTUS.]

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

SICINIUS.  
Pass no further.

CORIO LANUS.  
Ha! what is that?

BRUTUS.  
It will be dangerous to go on: no further.

CORIO LANUS.  
What makes this change?

MENENIUS.  
The matter?

COMINIUS.  
Hath he not pass'd the noble and the commons?

BRUTUS.  
Cominius, no.

CORIO LANUS.  
Have I had children's voices?

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

BRUTUS.

The people are incens'd against him.

SICINIUS.

Stop,

Or all will fall in broil.

CORIOLANUS.

Are these your herd?--

Must these have voices, that can yield them now,

And straight disclaim their tongues?--What are your offices?

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

Have you not set them on?

MENENIUS.

Be calm, be calm.

CORIOLANUS.

It is a purpos'd 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 rul'd.

BRUTUS.

Call't not a plot:

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

When corn was given them gratis, you repin'd;

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

Time-pleasers, flatterers, foes to nobleness.

CORIOLANUS.

Why, this was known before.

BRUTUS.

Not to them all.

CORIOLANUS.

Have you inform'd them sithence?

BRUTUS.

How! I inform them!

COMINIUS.

You are like to do such business.

BRUTUS.

Not unlike,

Each way, to better yours.

CORIOLANUS.

Why, then, should I be consul? By yond clouds,

Let me deserve so ill as you, and make me

Your fellow tribune.

SICINIUS.

You show too much of that

For which the people stir: if you will pass

To where you are bound, you must inquire your way,

Which you are out of, with a gentler spirit;

Or never be so noble as a consul,  
Nor yoke with him for tribune.

MENENIUS.

Let's be calm.

COMINIUS.

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

CORIOLANUS.

Tell me of corn!

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

MENENIUS.

Not now, not now.

FIRST SENATOR.

Not in this heat, sir, now.

CORIOLANUS.

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

MENENIUS.

Well, no more.

FIRST SENATOR.

No more words, we beseech you.

CORIOLANUS.

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

BRUTUS.

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

SICINIUS.

'Twere well  
We let the people know't.

MENENIUS.

What, what? his choler?

CORIO LANUS.

Choler!

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

SICINIUS.

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

CORIO LANUS.

Shall remain!--  
Hear you this Triton of the minnows? mark you  
His absolute 'shall'?

COMINIUS.

'Twas from the canon.

CORIO LANUS.

'Shall'!  
O good, but most unwise patricians! why,  
You grave but reckless senators, have you thus  
Given Hydra leave to choose an officer,  
That with his peremptory 'shall,' being but  
The horn and noise o' the monster, 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,  
Be not as common fools; if you are not,  
Let them have cushions by you. You are plebeians,  
If they be senators: and they are no less  
When, both your voices blended, the great'st taste  
Most palates theirs. They choose their magistrate;  
And such a one as he, who puts his 'shall,'  
His popular 'shall,' against a graver bench  
Than ever frown'd in Greece. By Jove himself,  
It makes the consuls base: and my soul aches  
To know, when two authorities are up,  
Neither supreme, how soon confusion  
May enter 'twixt the gap of both and take  
The one by the other.

COMINIUS.

Well, on to the market-place.

CORIO LANUS.

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

MENENIUS.

Well, well, no more of that.

CORIO LANUS.

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

BRUTUS.

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

CORIOLANUS.

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

MENENIUS.

Come, enough.

BRUTUS.

Enough, with over-measure.

CORIOLANUS.

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

BRUTUS.

Has said enough.

SICINIUS.

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

CORIOLANUS.

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

BRUTUS.

Manifest treason!

SICINIUS.

This a consul? no.

BRUTUS.

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

SICINIUS.

Go call the people [Exit BRUTUS.]; in whose name myself  
Attach thee as a traitorous innovator,  
A foe to the public weal. Obey, I charge thee,  
And follow to thine answer.

CORIOLANUS.

Hence, old goat!

SENATORS and PATRICIANS.

We'll surety him.

COMINIUS.

Aged sir, hands off.

CORIOLANUS.

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

SICINIUS.

Help, ye citizens!

[Re-enter Brutus, with the AEDILES and a rabble of Citizens.]

MENENIUS.

On both sides more respect.

SICINIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

Seize him, aediles.

PLEBEIANS.

Down with him! down with him!

SECOND SENATOR.

Weapons, weapons, weapons!

[They all bustle about CORIOLANUS.]

Tribunes! patricians! citizens!--What, ho!--  
Sicinius, Brutus, Coriolanus, Citizens!

CITIZENS.

Peace, peace, peace; stay, hold, peace!

MENENIUS.

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

SICINIUS.

Hear me, people: peace!

CITIZENS.

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

SICINIUS.

You are at point to lose your liberties;  
Marcius would have all from you; Marcius,  
Whom late you have nam'd for consul.

MENENIUS.

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

FIRST SENATOR.

To unbuild the city, and to lay all flat.

SICINIUS.

What is the city but the people?

CITIZENS.

True,  
The people are the city.

BRUTUS.

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

CITIZENS.

You so remain.

MENENIUS.

And so are like to do.

COMINIUS.

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

SICINIUS.

This deserves death.

BRUTUS.

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

SICINIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

Aediles, seize him!

CITIZENS.

Yield, Marcius, yield!

MENENIUS.

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

AEDILES.

Peace, peace!

MENENIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

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

CORIOLANUS.

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

MENENIUS.

Down with that sword!--Tribunes, withdraw awhile.

BRUTUS.

Lay hands upon him.

MENENIUS.

Help Marcius, help,  
You that be noble; help him, young and old!

CITIZENS.

Down with him, down with him!

[In this mutiny the TRIBUNES, the AEDILES, and the people are  
beat in.]

MENENIUS.

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

SECOND SENATOR.

Get you gone.

CORIOLANUS.

Stand fast;

We have as many friends as enemies.

MENENIUS.

Shall it be put to that?

FIRST SENATOR.

The gods forbid:

I pr'ythee, noble friend, home to thy house;

Leave us to cure this cause.

MENENIUS.

For 'tis a sore upon us

You cannot tent yourself; be gone, beseech you.

COMINIUS.

Come, sir, along with us.

CORIOLANUS.

I would they were barbarians,--as they are,

Though in Rome litter'd,--not Romans,--as they are not,

Though calv'd i' the porch o' the Capitol.

MENENIUS.

Be gone;

Put not your worthy rage into your tongue;

One time will owe another.

CORIOLANUS.

On fair ground

I could beat forty of them.

MENENIUS.

I could myself

Take up a brace o' the best of them; yea, the two tribunes.

COMINIUS.

But now 'tis odds beyond arithmetic;

And manhood is call'd foolery when it stands

Against a falling fabric.--Will you hence,

Before the tag return? whose rage doth rend

Like interrupted waters, and o'erbear

What they are used to bear.

MENENIUS.

Pray you be gone:

I'll try whether my old wit be in request

With those that have but little: this must be patch'd

With cloth of any colour.

COMINIUS.

Nay, come away.

[Exeunt CORIOLANUS, COMINIUS, and others.]

FIRST PATRICIAN.

This man has marr'd his fortune.

MENENIUS.

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

[A noise within.]

Here's goodly work!

SECOND PATRICIAN.

I would they were a-bed!

MENENIUS.

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

[Re-enter BRUTUS and SICINIUS, with the rabble.]

SICINIUS.

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

MENENIUS.

You worthy tribunes,--

SICINIUS.

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

CITIZENS.

He shall, sure on't.

MENENIUS.

Sir, sir,--

SICINIUS.

Peace!

MENENIUS.

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

SICINIUS.

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

MENENIUS.

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

SICINIUS.

Consul!--what consul?

MENENIUS.

The consul Coriolanus.

BRUTUS.

He consul!

CITIZENS.

No, no, no, no, no.

MENENIUS.

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

SICINIUS.

Speak briefly, then;  
For we are peremptory to dispatch  
This viperous traitor: to eject him hence  
Were but one danger; and to keep him here  
Our certain death: therefore it is decreed  
He dies to-night.

MENENIUS.

Now the good gods forbid  
That our renowned Rome, whose gratitude  
Towards her deserved children is enroll'd  
In Jove's own book, like an unnatural dam  
Should now eat up her own!

SICINIUS.

He's a disease that must be cut away.

MENENIUS.

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

SICINIUS.

This is clean kam.

BRUTUS.

Merely awry: when he did love his country,  
It honour'd him.

MENENIUS.

The service of the foot,  
Being once gangren'd, is not then respected  
For what before it was.

BRUTUS.

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

MENENIUS.

One word more, one word.  
This tiger-footed rage, when it shall find  
The harm of unscann'd swiftness, will, too late,  
Tie leaden pounds to's heels. Proceed by process;  
Lest parties,--as he is belov'd,--break out,  
And sack great Rome with Romans.

BRUTUS.

If it were so,--

SICINIUS.

What do ye talk?  
Have we not had a taste of his obedience?  
Our aediles smote? ourselves resisted?--come,--

MENENIUS.

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

FIRST SENATOR.

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

SICINIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

Go not home.

SICINIUS.

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

MENENIUS.

I'll bring him to you.--  
[To the SENATORS.] Let me desire your company: he must come,  
Or what is worst will follow.

FIRST SENATOR.  
Pray you let's to him.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II. Rome. A room in CORIOLANUS'S house.

[Enter CORIOLANUS and Patricians.]

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

FIRST PATRICIAN.  
You do the nobler.

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

[Enter VOLUMNIA.]

I talk of you: [To Volumnia.]  
Why did you wish me milder? Would you have me  
False to my nature? Rather say, I play  
The man I am.

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

CORIOLANUS.  
Let go.

VOLUMNIA.  
You might have been enough the man you are  
With striving less to be so: lesser had been  
The thwartings of your dispositions, if  
You had not show'd them how ye were dispos'd,  
Ere they lack'd power to cross you.

CORIOLANUS.  
Let them hang.

VOLUMNIA.  
Ay, and burn too.

[Enter MENENIUS with the SENATORS.]

MENENIUS.

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

FIRST SENATOR.

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

VOLUMNIA.

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

MENENIUS.

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

CORIOLANUS.

What must I do?

MENENIUS.

Return to the tribunes.

CORIOLANUS.

Well, what then? what then?

MENENIUS.

Repent what you have spoke.

CORIOLANUS.

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

VOLUMNIA.

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

CORIOLANUS.

Tush, tush!

MENENIUS.

A good demand.

VOLUMNIA.

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

It stands in like request?

CORIOLANUS.

Why force you this?

VOLUMNIA.

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

MENENIUS.

Noble lady!--

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

VOLUMNIA.

I pr'ythee 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 busines  
Action is eloquence, and the eyes of the ignorant  
More learned than the ears,--waving thy head,  
Which often, thus correcting thy stout heart,  
Now humble as the ripest mulberry  
That will not hold the handling: or say to them  
Thou art their soldier, and, being bred in broils,  
Hast not the soft way which, thou dost confess,  
Were fit for thee to use, as they to claim,  
In asking their good loves; but thou wilt frame  
Thyself, forsooth, hereafter theirs, so far  
As thou hast power and person.

MENENIUS.

This but done  
Even as she speaks, why, their hearts were yours:  
For they have pardons, being ask'd, as free  
As words to little purpose.

VOLUMNIA.

Pr'ythee now,  
Go, and be rul'd; although I know thou had'st rather  
Follow thine enemy in a fiery gulf  
Than flatter him in a bower.

[Enter COMINIUS.]

Here is Cominius.

COMINIUS.

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

MENENIUS.

Only fair speech.

COMINIUS.

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

VOLUMNIA.

He must, and will.--  
Pr'ythee now, say you will, and go about it.

CORIOLANUS.

Must I go show them my unbarb'd sponce? must I  
With my base tongue, give to my noble heart  
A lie, that it must bear? Well, I will do't:  
Yet, were there but this single plot to lose,  
This mould of Marcius, they to dust should grind it,  
And throw't against the wind.--To the market-place!--  
You have put me now to such a part which never  
I shall discharge to the life.

COMINIUS.

Come, come, we'll prompt you.

VOLUMNIA.

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

CORIOLANUS.

Well, I must do't:  
Away, my disposition, and possess me  
Some harlot's spirit! My throat of war be turn'd,  
Which quired with my drum, into a pipe  
Small as an eunuch, or the virgin voice  
That babies lulls asleep! the smiles of knaves  
Tent in my cheeks; and school-boys' 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 receiv'd an alms!--I will not do't;  
Lest I surcease to honour mine own truth,  
And by my body's action teach my mind  
A most inherent baseness.

VOLUMNIA.

At thy choice, then:  
To beg of thee, it is my more dishonour  
Than thou of them. Come all to ruin: let  
Thy mother rather feel thy pride than fear

Thy dangerous stoutness; for I mock at death  
With as big heart as thou. Do as thou list.  
Thy valiantness was mine, thou suck'dst it from me;  
But owe thy pride thyself.

CORIOLANUS.

Pray, be content:

Mother, I am going to the market-place;  
Chide me no more. I'll mountebank their loves,  
Cog their hearts from them, and come home belov'd  
Of all the trades in Rome. Look, I am going.  
Commend me to my wife. I'll return consul;  
Or never trust to what my tongue can do  
I' the way of flattery further.

VOLUMNIA.

Do your will.

[Exit.]

COMINIUS.

Away! The tribunes do attend you: arm yourself  
To answer mildly; for they are prepar'd  
With accusations, as I hear, more strong  
Than are upon you yet.

CORIOLANUS.

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

MENENIUS.

Ay, but mildly.

CORIOLANUS.

Well, mildly be it then; mildly.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III. Rome. The Forum.

[Enter SICINIUS and BRUTUS.]

BRUTUS.

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

[Enter an AEDILE.]

What, will he come?

AEDILE.

He's coming.

BRUTUS.

How accompanied?

AEDILE.

With old Menenius, and those senators  
That always favour'd him.

SICINIUS.

Have you a catalogue  
Of all the voices that we have procur'd,  
Set down by the poll?

AEDILE.

I have; 'tis ready.

SICINIUS.

Have you collected them by tribes?

AEDILE.

I have.

SICINIUS.

Assemble presently the people hither:  
And when they hear me say 'It shall be so  
I' 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.

I shall inform them.

BRUTUS.

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

AEDILE.

Very well.

SICINIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

Go about it.

[Exit AEDILE.]

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

SICINIUS.

Well, here he comes.

[Enter CORIOLANUS, MENENIUS, COMINIUS, Senators, and Patricians.]

MENENIUS.

Calmly, I do beseech you.

CORIOLANUS.

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

FIRST SENATOR.

Amen, amen!

MENENIUS.

A noble wish.

[Re-enter the AEDILE, with Citizens.]

SICINIUS.

Draw near, ye people.

AEDILE.

List to your tribunes; audience: peace, I say!

CORIOLANUS.

First, hear me speak.

BOTH TRIBUNES.

Well, say.--Peace, ho!

CORIOLANUS.

Shall I be charg'd no further than this present?  
Must all determine here?

SICINIUS.

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

CORIOLANUS.

I am content.

MENENIUS.

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

CORIOLANUS.

Scratches with briers,  
Scars to move laughter only.

MENENIUS.

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

His rougher accents for malicious sounds,  
But, as I say, such as become a soldier,  
Rather than envy you.

COMINIUS.  
Well, well, no more.

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

SICINIUS.  
Answer to us.

CORIOLANUS.  
Say then: 'tis true, I ought so.

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

CORIOLANUS.  
How! traitor!

MENENIUS.  
Nay, temperately; your promise.

CORIOLANUS.  
The fires i' the lowest hell fold in the people!  
Call me their traitor!--Thou injurious tribune!  
Within thine eyes sat twenty thousand deaths,  
In thy hands clutch'd as many millions, in  
Thy lying tongue both numbers, I would say,  
Thou liest unto thee with a voice as free  
As I do pray the gods.

SICINIUS.  
Mark you this, people?

CITIZENS.  
To the rock, to the rock, with him!

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

BRUTUS.  
But since he hath  
Serv'd well for Rome,--

CORIOLANUS.

What do you prate of service?

BRUTUS.

I talk of that that know it.

CORIOLANUS.

You?

MENENIUS.

Is this the promise that you made your mother?

COMINIUS.

Know, I pray you,--

CORIOLANUS.

I'll know no further:

Let them pronounce the steep Tarpeian death,  
Vagabond exile, flaying, pent to linger  
But with a grain a day, I would not buy  
Their mercy at the price of one fair word,  
Nor check my courage for what they can give,  
To have't with saying Good-morrow.

SICINIUS.

For that he has,--

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

CITIZENS.

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

COMINIUS.

Hear me, my masters and my common friends,--

SICINIUS.

He's sentenc'd; no more hearing.

COMINIUS.

Let me speak:

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

SICINIUS.

We know your drift. Speak what?

BRUTUS.

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

CITIZENS.

It shall be so, it shall be so.

CORIOLANUS.

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

[Exeunt CORIOLANUS, COMINIUS, MENENIUS, Senators, and  
Patricians.]

AEDILE.

The people's enemy is gone, is gone!

CITIZENS.

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

[Shouting, and throwing up their caps.]

SICINIUS.

Go, see him out at gates, and follow him,  
As he hath follow'd you, with all despite;  
Give him deserv'd vexation. Let a guard  
Attend us through the city.

CITIZENS.

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

[Exeunt.]

ACT IV.

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

[Enter CORIOLANUS, VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, MENENIUS, COMINIUS, and  
several young Patricians.]

CORIO LANUS.

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

VIRGILIA.

O heavens! O heavens!

CORIO LANUS.

Nay, I pr'ythee, woman,--

VOLUMNIA.

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

CORIO LANUS.

What, what, what!

I shall be lov'd when I am lack'd. Nay, mother,  
Resume that spirit when you were wont to say,  
If you had been the wife of Hercules,  
Six of his labours you'd have done, and sav'd  
Your husband so much sweat.--Cominius,  
Droop not; adieu.--Farewell, my wife,--my mother:  
I'll do well yet.--Thou old and true Menenius,  
Thy tears are salter than a younger man's,  
And venomous to thine eyes.--My sometime general,  
I have seen thee stern, and thou hast oft beheld  
Heart-hard'ning spectacles; tell these sad women  
'Tis fond to wail inevitable strokes,  
As 'tis to laugh at 'em.--My mother, you wot well  
My hazards still have been your solace: and  
Believe't not lightly,--though I go alone,  
Like to a lonely dragon, that his fen  
Makes fear'd and talk'd of more than seen,--your son  
Will or exceed the common or be caught  
With cautelous baits and practice.

VOLUMNIA.

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

CORIO LANUS.

O the gods!

COMINIUS.

I'll follow thee a month, devise with thee  
Where thou shalt rest, that thou mayst hear of us,  
And we of thee: so, if the time thrust forth  
A cause for thy repeal, we shall not send

O'er the vast world to seek a single man;  
And lose advantage, which doth ever cool  
I' the absence of the needer.

CORIOLANUS.

Fare ye well:  
Thou hast years upon thee; and thou art too full  
Of the wars' surfeits to go rove with one  
That's yet unbruis'd: bring me but out at gate.--  
Come, my sweet wife, my dearest mother, and  
My friends of noble touch; when I am forth,  
Bid me farewell, and smile. I pray you, come.  
While I remain above the ground, you shall  
Hear from me still; and never of me aught  
But what is like me formerly.

MENENIUS.

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

CORIOLANUS.

Give me thy hand:--  
Come.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II. Rome. A street near the gate.

[Enter SICINIUS, BRUTUS, and an AEDILE.]

SICINIUS.

Bid them all home; he's gone, and we'll no further.--  
The nobility are vex'd, whom we see have sided  
In his behalf.

BRUTUS.

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

SICINIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

Dismiss them home.

[Exit AEDILE.]

Here comes his mother.

SICINIUS.

Let's not meet her.

BRUTUS.

Why?

SICINIUS.

They say she's mad.

BRUTUS.

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

[Enter VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, and MENENIUS.]

VOLUMNIA.

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

MENENIUS.

Peace, peace, be not so loud.

VOLUMNIA.

If that I could for weeping, you should hear,--  
Nay, and you shall hear some.--[To BRUTUS.] Will you be gone?

VIRGILIA.

You shall stay too[To SICINIUS.]: I would I had the power  
To say so to my husband.

SICINIUS.

Are you mankind?

VOLUMNIA.

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

SICINIUS.

O blessed heavens!

VOLUMNIA.

Moe noble blows than ever thou wise words;  
And for Rome's good.--I'll tell thee what;--yet go;--  
Nay, but thou shalt stay too:--I would my son  
Were in Arabia, and thy tribe before him,  
His good sword in his hand.

SICINIUS.

What then?

VIRGILIA.

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

VOLUMNIA.

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

MENENIUS.

Come, come, peace.

SICINIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

I would he had.

VOLUMNIA.

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

BRUTUS.

Pray, let us go.

VOLUMNIA.

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

BRUTUS.

Well, well, we'll leave you.

SICINIUS.

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

VOLUMNIA.

Take my prayers with you.--

[Exeunt TRIBUNES.]

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

MENENIUS.

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

VOLUMNIA.

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

[Exeunt.]

MENENIUS.

Fie, fie, fie!

SCENE III. A highway between Rome and Antium.

[Enter a ROMAN and a VOLSCE, meeting.]

ROMAN.

I know you well, sir, and you know me; your name, I think, is Adrian.

VOLSCE.

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

ROMAN.

I am a Roman; and my services are, as you are, against 'em: know you me yet?

VOLSCE.

Nicanor? no!

ROMAN.

The same, sir.

VOLSCE.

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

ROMAN.

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

VOLSCE.

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

ROMAN.

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

VOLSCE.

Coriolanus banished!

ROMAN.

Banished, sir.

VOLSCE.

You will be welcome with this intelligence, Nicanor.

ROMAN.

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

VOLSCE.

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

ROMAN.

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

VOLSCE.

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

ROMAN.

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

VOLSCE.

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

ROMAN.

Well, let us go together.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE IV. Antium. Before AUFIDIUS'S house.

[Enter CORIOLANUS, in mean apparel, disguised and muffled.]

CORIOLANUS.

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

[Enter a CITIZEN.]

Save you, sir.

CITIZEN.

And you.

CORIOLANUS.

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

CITIZEN.

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

CORIOLANUS.

Which is his house, beseech you?

CITIZEN.

This, here, before you.

CORIOLANUS.

Thank you, sir; farewell.

[Exit CITIZEN.]

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

SCENE V. Antium. A hall in AUFIDIUS'S house.

[Music within. Enter A SERVANT.]

FIRST SERVANT.

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

[Exit.]

[Enter a second SERVANT.]

SECOND SERVANT.

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 SERVANT.]

FIRST SERVANT.

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

CORIOLANUS.

I have deserv'd no better entertainment  
In being Coriolanus.

[Re-enter second SERVANT.]

SECOND SERVANT.

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 SERVANT.

Away? Get you away.

CORIOLANUS.

Now the art troublesome.

SECOND SERVANT.

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

[Enter a third SERVANT. The first meets him.]

THIRD SERVANT.

What fellow's this?

FIRST SERVANT.

A strange one as ever I looked on: I cannot get him out o' the house. Pr'ythee call my master to him.

THIRD SERVANT.

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

CORIOLANUS.

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

THIRD SERVANT.

What are you?

CORIOLANUS.

A gentleman.

THIRD SERVANT.

A marvellous poor one.

CORIOLANUS.

True, so I am.

THIRD SERVANT.

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 SERVANT.

What, you will not?--Pr'ythee, tell my master what a strange guest he has here.

SECOND SERVANT.

And I shall.

[Exit.]

THIRD SERVANT.  
Where dwell'st thou?

CORIOLANUS.  
Under the canopy.

THIRD SERVANT.  
Under the canopy?

CORIOLANUS.  
Ay.

THIRD SERVANT.  
Where's that?

CORIOLANUS.  
I' the city of kites and crows.

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

CORIOLANUS.  
No, I serve not thy master.

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

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

[Beats him away.]

[Enter AUFIDIUS and the second SERVANT.]

AUFIDIUS.  
Where is this fellow?

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

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

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

AUFIDIUS.  
What is thy name?

[Servants retire.]

CORIO LANUS.

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

AUFIDIUS.

Say, what's thy name?  
Thou has a grim appearance, and thy face  
Bears a command in't; though thy tackle's torn,  
Thou show'st a noble vessel: what's thy name?

CORIO LANUS.

Prepare thy brow to frown:--know'st thou me yet?

AUFIDIUS.

I know thee not:--thy name?

CORIO LANUS.

My name is Caius Marcius, who hath done  
To thee particularly, and to all the Volscies,  
Great hurt and mischief; thereto witness may  
My surname, Coriolanus: the painful service,  
The extreme dangers, and the drops of blood  
Shed for my thankless country, are requited  
But with that surname; a good memory,  
And witness of the malice and displeasure  
Which thou shouldst bear me: only that name remains;  
The cruelty and envy of the people,  
Permitted by our dastard nobles, who  
Have all forsook me, hath devour'd the rest,  
And suffer'd me by the voice of slaves to be  
Whoop'd out of Rome. Now, this extremity  
Hath brought me to thy hearth: not out of hope,  
Mistake me not, to save my life; for if  
I had fear'd death, of all the men i' the world  
I would have 'voided thee; but in mere spite,  
To be full quit of those my banishers,  
Stand I before thee here. Then if thou hast  
A heart of wreak in thee, that wilt revenge  
Thine own particular wrongs, and stop those maims  
Of shame seen through thy country, speed thee straight  
And make my misery serve thy turn: so use it  
That my revengeful services may prove  
As benefits to thee; for I will fight  
Against my canker'd country with the spleen  
Of all the under fiends. But if so be  
Thou dar'st not this, and that to prove more fortunes  
Th'art tir'd, then, in a word, I also am  
Longer to live most weary, and present  
My throat to thee and to thy ancient malice;  
Which not to cut would show thee but a fool,  
Since I have ever follow'd thee with hate,  
Drawn tuns of blood out of thy country's breast,  
And cannot live but to thy shame, unless  
It be to do thee service.

AUFIDIUS.

O Marcius, Marcius!  
Each word thou hast spoke hath weeded from my heart  
A root of ancient envy. If Jupiter

Should from yond cloud speak divine things,  
And say "'Tis true,' I'd not believe them more  
Than thee, all noble Marcius.--Let me twine  
Mine arms about that body, where against  
My grained ash an hundred times hath broke  
And scar'd the moon with splinters; here I clip  
The anvil of my sword, and do contest  
As hotly and as nobly with thy love  
As ever in ambitious strength I did  
Contend against thy valour. Know thou first,  
I lov'd the maid I married; never man  
Sighed truer breath; but that I see thee here,  
Thou noble thing! more dances my rapt heart  
Than when I first my wedded mistress saw  
Bestride my threshold. Why, thou Mars! I tell thee  
We have a power on foot; and I had purpose  
Once more to hew thy target from thy brawn,  
Or lose mine arm for't: thou hast beat me out  
Twelve several times, and I have nightly since  
Dreamt of encounters 'twixt thyself and me;  
We have been down together in my sleep,  
Unbuckling helms, fisting each other's throat,  
And wak'd half dead with nothing. Worthy Marcius,  
Had we no other 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'erbear. O, come, go in,  
And take our friendly senators by the hands;  
Who now are here, taking their leaves of me,  
Who am prepar'd against your territories,  
Though not for Rome itself.

CORIOLANUS.

You bless me, gods!

AUFIDIUS.

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

[Exeunt CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS.]

FIRST SERVANT.

Here's a strange alteration!

SECOND SERVANT.

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

FIRST SERVANT.

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

SECOND SERVANT.

Nay, I knew by his face that there was something in him; he had, sir, a kind of face, methought,--I cannot tell how to term it.

FIRST SERVANT.

He had so, looking as it were,--would I were hanged, but I thought there was more in him than I could think.

SECOND SERVANT.

So did I, I'll be sworn: he is simply the rarest man i' the world.

FIRST SERVANT.

I think he is; but a greater soldier than he you wot on.

SECOND SERVANT.

Who, my master?

FIRST SERVANT.

Nay, it's no matter for that.

SECOND SERVANT.

Worth six on him.

FIRST SERVANT.

Nay, not so neither: but I take him to be the greater soldier.

SECOND SERVANT.

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

FIRST SERVANT.

Ay, and for an assault too.

[Re-enter third SERVANT.]

THIRD SERVANT.

O slaves, I can tell you news,--news, you rascals!

FIRST and SECOND SERVANT.

What, what, what? let's partake.

THIRD SERVANT.

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

FIRST and SECOND SERVANT.

Wherefore? wherefore?

THIRD SERVANT.

Why, here's he that was wont to thwack our general,--Caius Marcius.

FIRST SERVANT.

Why do you say, thwack our general?

THIRD SERVANT.

I do not say thwack our general; but he was always good enough for him.

SECOND SERVANT.

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

FIRST SERVANT.

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

SECOND SERVANT.

An he had been cannibally given, he might have broiled and eaten him too.

FIRST SERVANT.

But more of thy news?

THIRD SERVANT.

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, 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 SERVANT.

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

THIRD SERVANT.

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 dejectitude.

FIRST SERVANT.

Dejectitude! what's that?

THIRD SERVANT.

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 SERVANT.

But when goes this forward?

THIRD SERVANT.

To-morrow; to-day; presently; you shall have the drum struck up this afternoon: 'tis as it were parcel of their feast, and to be executed ere they wipe their lips.

SECOND SERVANT.

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

FIRST SERVANT.

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 SERVANT.

'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 SERVANT.

Ay, and it makes men hate one another.

THIRD SERVANT.

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

ALL.

In, in, in, in!

[Exeunt.]

SCENE VI. Rome. A public place.

[Enter SICINIUS and BRUTUS.]

SICINIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

We stood to't in good time.--Is this Menenius?

SICINIUS.

'Tis he, 'tis he. O, he is grown most kind  
Of late.

[Enter MENENIUS

BRUTUS.

Hail, sir!

MENENIUS.

Hail to you both!

SICINIUS.

Your Coriolanus is not much miss'd  
But with his friends: the commonwealth doth stand;  
And so would do, were he more angry at it.

MENENIUS.

All's well, and might have been much better if  
He could have temporiz'd.

SICINIUS.

Where is he, hear you?

MENENIUS.

Nay, I hear nothing: his mother and his wife  
Hear nothing from him.

[Enter three or four Citizens.]

CITIZENS. The gods preserve you both!

SICINIUS.

God-den, our neighbours.

BRUTUS.

God-den to you all, God-den to you all.

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

SICINIUS.

Live and thrive!

BRUTUS.

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

CITIZENS.

Now the gods keep you!

BOTH TRIBUNES.

Farewell, farewell.

[Exeunt Citizens.]

SICINIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

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

SICINIUS.

And affecting one sole throne,  
Without assistance.

MENENIUS.

I think not so.

SICINIUS.

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

BRUTUS.

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

[Enter an AEDILE.]

AEDILE.

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

MENENIUS.

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

SICINIUS.

Come, what talk you of Marcius?

BRUTUS.

Go see this rumourer whipp'd.--It cannot be  
The Volsces dare break with us.

MENENIUS.

Cannot be!  
We have record that very well it can;  
And three examples of the like hath been  
Within my age. But reason with the fellow,  
Before you punish him, where he heard this;  
Lest you shall chance to whip your information  
And beat the messenger who bids beware  
Of what is to be dreaded.

SICINIUS.

Tell not me:  
I know this cannot be.

BRUTUS.

Not possible.

[Enter A MESSENGER.]

MESSENGER.

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

SICINIUS.

'Tis this slave,--  
Go whip him fore the people's eyes:--his raising;  
Nothing but his report.

MESSENGER.

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

SICINIUS.

What more fearful?

MESSENGER.

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

SICINIUS.

This is most likely!

BRUTUS.

Rais'd only, that the weaker sort may wish  
Good Marcius home again.

SICINIUS.

The very trick on 't.

MENENIUS.

This is unlikely:  
He and Aufidius can no more atone  
Than violentest contrariety.

[Enter a second MESSENGER.]

SECOND MESSENGER.

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

[Enter COMINIUS.]

COMINIUS.

O, you have made good work!

MENENIUS.

What news? what news?

COMINIUS.

You have help to ravish your own daughters, and  
To melt the city leads upon your pates;  
To see your wives dishonour'd to your noses,--

MENENIUS.

What's the news? what's the news?

COMINIUS.

Your temples burned in their cement; and  
Your franchises, whereon you stood, confin'd  
Into an auger's bore.

MENENIUS.

Pray now, your news?--

You have made fair work, I fear me.--Pray, your news.

If Marcius should be join'd wi' 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; and they follow him,  
Against us brats, with no less confidence  
Than boys pursuing summer butterflies,  
Or butchers killing flies.

MENENIUS.

You have made good work,

You and your apron men; you that stood so much

Upon the voice of occupation and

The breath of garlic-eaters!

COMINIUS.

He'll shake

Your Rome about your ears.

MENENIUS.

As Hercules

Did shake down mellow fruit.--You have made fair work!

BRUTUS.

But is this true, sir?

COMINIUS.

Ay; and you'll look pale

Before you find it other. All the regions

Do smilingly revolt; and who resists

Are mock'd for valiant ignorance,

And perish constant fools. Who is't can blame him?

Your enemies and his find something in him.

MENENIUS.

We are all undone unless

The noble man have mercy.

COMINIUS.

Who shall ask it?

The tribunes cannot do't for shame; the people

Deserve such pity of him as the wolf

Does of the shepherds: for his best friends, if they

Should say 'Be good to Rome,' they charg'd him even

As those should do that had deserv'd his hate,

And therein show'd like enemies.

MENENIUS.

'Tis true:

If he were putting to my house the brand

That should consume it, I have not the face

To say 'Beseech you, cease.'--You have made fair hands,

You and your crafts! You have crafted fair!

COMINIUS.

You have brought  
A trembling upon Rome, such as was never  
So incapable of help.

BOTH TRIBUNES.

Say not, we brought it.

MENENIUS.

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

COMINIUS.

But I fear  
They'll roar him in again. Tullus Aufidius,  
The second name of men, obeys his points  
As if he were his officer:--desperation  
Is all the policy, strength, and defence,  
That Rome can make against them.

[Enter a troop of citizens.]

MENENIUS.

Here comes the clusters.--  
And is Aufidius with him?--You are they  
That made the air unwholesome, when you cast  
Your stinking greasy caps in hooting at  
Coriolanus' exile. Now he's coming;  
And not a hair upon a soldier's head  
Which will not prove a whip: as many coxcombs  
As you threw caps up will he tumble down,  
And pay you for your voices. 'Tis no matter;  
If he could burn us all into one coal  
We have deserv'd it.

CITIZENS.

Faith, we hear fearful news.

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

SECOND CITIZEN.

And so did I.

THIRD CITIZEN.

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

COMINIUS.

You are goodly things, you voices!

MENENIUS.

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

COMINIUS.

O, ay; what else?

[Exeunt COMINIUS and MENENIUS.]

SICINIUS.

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

FIRST CITIZEN.

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

SECOND CITIZEN.

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

[Exeunt Citizens.]

BRUTUS.

I do not like this news.

SICINIUS.

Nor I.

BRUTUS.

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

SICINIUS.

Pray let's go.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE VII. A camp at a short distance from Rome.

[Enter AUFIDIUS and his LIEUTENANT.]

AUFIDIUS.

Do they still fly to the Roman?

LIEUTENANT.

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

AUFIDIUS.

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

LIEUTENANT.

Yet I wish, sir,--

I mean, for your particular,--you had not

Join'd in commission with him; but either  
Had borne the action of yourself, or else  
To him had left it solely.

AUFIDIUS.

I understand thee well; and be thou sure,  
When he shall come to his account, he knows not  
What I can urge against him. Although it seems,  
And so he thinks, and is no less apparent  
To the vulgar eye, that he bears all things fairly,  
And shows good husbandry for the Volscian state,  
Fights dragon-like, and does achieve as soon  
As draw his sword: yet he hath left undone  
That which shall break his neck or hazard mine  
Whene'er we come to our account.

LIEUTENANT.

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

AUFIDIUS.

All places yield to him ere he sits down;  
And the nobility of Rome are his;  
The senators and patricians love him too:  
The tribunes are no soldiers; and their people  
Will be as rash in the repeal as hasty  
To expel him thence. I think he'll be to Rome  
As is the osprey to the fish, who takes it  
By sovereignty of nature. First he was  
A noble servant to them; but he could not  
Carry his honours even: whether 'twas pride,  
Which out of daily fortune ever taints  
The happy man; whether defect of judgment,  
To fail in the disposing of those chances  
Which he was lord of; or whether nature,  
Not to be other than one thing, not moving  
From the casque to the cushion, but commanding peace  
Even with the same austerity and garb  
As he controll'd the war; but one of these,--  
As he hath spices of them all, not all,  
For I dare so far free him,--made him fear'd,  
So hated, and so banish'd: but he has a merit  
To choke it in the utterance. So our virtues  
Lie in the interpretation of the time:  
And power, unto itself most commendable,  
Hath not a tomb so evident as a cheer  
To extol what it hath done.  
One fire drives out one fire; one nail, one nail;  
Rights by rights falter, strengths by strengths do fail.  
Come, let's away. When, Caius, Rome is thine,  
Thou art poor'st of all; then shortly art thou mine.

[Exeunt.]

ACT V.

SCENE I. Rome. A public place

[Enter MENENIUS, COMINIUS, SICINIUS and BRUTUS, and others.]

MENENIUS.

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

COMINIUS.

He would not seem to know me.

MENENIUS.

Do you hear?

COMINIUS.

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

MENENIUS.

Why, so!--you have made good work!  
A pair of tribunes that have rack'd for Rome,  
To make coals cheap,--a noble memory!

COMINIUS.

I minded him how royal 'twas to pardon  
When it was less expected: he replied,  
It was a bare petition of a state  
To one whom they had punish'd.

MENENIUS.

Very well:  
Could he say less?

COMINIUS.

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

MENENIUS.

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

SICINIUS.

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

More than the instant army we can make,  
Might stop our countryman.

MENENIUS.  
No; I'll not meddle.

SICINIUS.  
Pray you, go to him.

MENENIUS.  
What should I do?

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

MENENIUS.  
Well, and say that Marcius  
Return me, as Cominius is return'd,  
Unheard; what then?  
But as a discontented friend, grief-shot  
With his unkindness? Say't be so?

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

MENENIUS.  
I'll undertake't;  
I think he'll hear me. Yet to bite his lip  
And hum at good Cominius much unhearts me.  
He was not taken well: he had not din'd;  
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 pipes and these conveyances of our blood  
With wine and feeding, we have suppler souls  
Than in our priest-like fasts. Therefore I'll watch him  
Till he be dieted to my request,  
And then I'll set upon him.

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

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

[Exit.]

COMINIUS.  
He'll never hear him.

SICINIUS.  
Not?

COMINIUS.

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

[Exeunt.]

SCENE II. An Advanced post of the Volscian camp before Rome. The  
Guards at their station.

[Enter to them MENENIUS.]

FIRST GUARD.  
Stay: whence are you?

SECOND GUARD.  
Stand, and go back.

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

FIRST GUARD.  
From whence?

MENENIUS.  
From Rome.

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

SECOND GUARD.  
You'll see your Rome embrac'd with fire before  
You'll speak with Coriolanus.

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

FIRST GUARD.  
Be it so; go back: the virtue of your name  
Is not here passable.

MENENIUS.  
I tell thee, fellow,  
Thy general is my lover: I have been

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

FIRST GUARD.

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

MENENIUS.

Pr'ythee, fellow, remember my name is Menenius, always  
factionary on the party of your general.

SECOND GUARD.

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 GUARD.

You are a Roman, are you?

MENENIUS.

I am as thy general is.

FIRST GUARD.

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

MENENIUS.

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

SECOND GUARD.

Come, my captain knows you not.

MENENIUS.

I mean thy general.

FIRST GUARD.

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

having:--back.

MENENIUS.

Nay, but fellow, fellow,--

[Enter CORIOLANUS with AUFIDIUS.]

CORIOLANUS.

What's the matter?

MENENIUS.

Now, you companion, I'll say an errand for you; you shall know now that I am in estimation; you shall perceive that a jack guardant cannot office me from my son Coriolanus: guess but by my entertainment with him if thou standest not i' the state of hanging, or of some death more long in spectatorship and crueller in suffering; behold now presently, and swoon for what's to come upon thee.--The glorious gods sit in hourly synod about thy particular prosperity, and love thee no worse than thy old father Menenius does! O my son! my son! thou art preparing fire for us; look thee, here's water to quench it. I was hardly moved to come to thee; but being assured none but myself could move thee, I have been blown out of your gates with sighs; and conjure thee to pardon Rome and thy petitionary countrymen. The good gods assuage thy wrath, and turn the dregs of it upon this varlet here; this, who, like a block, hath denied my access to thee.

CORIOLANUS.

Away!

MENENIUS.

How! away!

CORIOLANUS.

Wife, mother, child, I know not. My affairs  
Are servanted to others: though I owe  
My revenge properly, my remission lies  
In Volscian breasts. That we have been familiar,  
Ingrate forgetfulness shall poison, rather  
Than pity note how much.--Therefore be gone.  
Mine ears against your suits are stronger than  
Your gates against my force. Yet, for I lov'd thee,  
Take this along; I writ it for thy sake,

[Gives a letter.]

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

AUFIDIUS.

You keep a constant temper.

[Exeunt CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS.]

FIRST GUARD.

Now, sir, is your name Menenius?

SECOND GUARD.

'Tis a spell, you see, of much power: you know the way home

again.

FIRST GUARD.

Do you hear how we are shent for keeping your greatness back?

SECOND GUARD.

What cause, do you think, I have to swoon?

MENENIUS.

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

[Exit.]

FIRST GUARD.

A noble fellow, I warrant him.

SECOND GUARD.

The worthy fellow is our general: he is the rock, the oak not to be wind-shaken.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE III. The tent of CORIOLANUS.

[Enter CORIOLANUS, AUFIDIUS, and others.]

CORIOLANUS.

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

AUFIDIUS.

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

CORIOLANUS.

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

[Shout within.]

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

[Enter, in mourning habits, VIRGILIA, VOLUMNIA, leading YOUNG MARCIUS, VALERIA, and attendants.]

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

VIRGILIA.  
My lord and husband!

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

VIRGILIA.  
The sorrow that delivers us thus chang'd  
Makes you think so.

CORIOLANUS.  
Like a dull actor now,  
I have forgot my part and I am out,  
Even to a full disgrace. Best of my flesh,  
Forgive my tyranny; but do not say,  
For that, 'Forgive our Romans.'--O, a kiss  
Long as my exile, sweet as my revenge;  
Now, by the jealous queen of heaven, that kiss  
I carried from thee, dear; and my true lip  
Hath virgin'd it e'er since.--You gods! I prate,  
And the most noble mother of the world  
Leave unsaluted: sink, my knee, i' the earth;

[Kneels.]

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

VOLUMNIA.  
O, stand up bless'd!  
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.]

CORIO LANUS.

What is this?  
Your knees to me? to your corrected son?  
Then let the pebbles on the hungry beach  
Fillip the stars; then let the mutinous winds  
Strike the proud cedars 'gainst the fiery sun,  
Murdering impossibility, to make  
What cannot be, slight work.

VOLUMNIA.

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

CORIO LANUS.

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

VOLUMNIA.

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

CORIO LANUS.

The god of soldiers,  
With the consent of supreme Jove, inform  
Thy thoughts with nobleness; that thou mayst prove  
To shame invulnerable, and stick i' the wars  
Like a great sea-mark, standing every flaw,  
And saving those that eye thee!

VOLUMNIA.

Your knee, sirrah.

CORIO LANUS.

That's my brave boy.

VOLUMNIA.

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

CORIO LANUS.

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

VOLUMNIA.

O, no more, no more!  
You have said you will not grant us anything;  
For we have nothing else to ask but that

Which you deny already: yet we will ask;  
That, if you fail in our request, the blame  
May hang upon your hardness; therefore hear us.

CORIOLANUS.

Aufidius, and you Volsces, mark: for we'll  
Hear nought from Rome in private.--Your request?

VOLUMNIA.

Should we be silent and not speak, our raiment  
And state of bodies would bewray what life  
We have led since thy exile. Think with thyself,  
How more unfortunate than all living women  
Are we come hither: since that thy sight, which should  
Make our eyes flow with joy, hearts dance with comforts,  
Constrains them weep, and shake with fear and sorrow;  
Making the mother, wife, and child, to see  
The son, the husband, and the father, tearing  
His country's bowels out. And to poor we,  
Thine enmity's most capital: thou barr'st us  
Our prayers to the gods, which is a comfort  
That all but we enjoy; for how can we,  
Alas, how can we for our country pray,  
Whereto we are bound,--together with thy victory,  
Whereto we are bound? alack, or we must lose  
The country, our dear nurse, or else thy person,  
Our comfort in the country. We must find  
An evident calamity, though we had  
Our wish, which side should win; for either thou  
Must, as a foreign recreant, be led  
With manacles through our streets, or else  
Triumphantly tread on thy country's ruin,  
And bear the palm for having bravely shed  
Thy wife and children's blood. For myself, son,  
I purpose not to wait on fortune till  
These wars determine: if I can not persuade thee  
Rather to show a noble grace to both parts  
Than seek the end of one, thou shalt no sooner  
March to assault thy country than to tread,--  
Trust to't, thou shalt not,--on thy mother's womb  
That brought thee to this world.

VIRGILIA.

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

BOY.

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

CORIOLANUS.

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

[Rising.]

VOLUMNIA.

Nay, go not from us thus.

If it were so that our request did tend  
To save the Romans, thereby to destroy  
The Volsces whom you serve, you might condemn us,  
As poisonous of your honour: no; our suit  
Is that you reconcile them: while the Volsces  
May say 'This mercy we have show'd,' the Romans  
'This we receiv'd,' and each in either side  
Give the all-hail to thee, and cry, 'Be bless'd  
For making up this peace!' Thou know'st, great son,  
The end of war's uncertain; but this certain,  
That, if thou conquer Rome, the benefit  
Which thou shalt thereby reap is such a name  
Whose repetition will be dogg'd with curses;  
Whose chronicle thus writ:--'The man was noble,  
But with his last attempt he wip'd it out;  
Destroy'd his country, and his name remains  
To the ensuing age abhorr'd.' Speak to me, son:  
Thou hast affected the fine strains of honour,  
To imitate the graces of the gods,  
To tear with thunder the wide cheeks o' the air,  
And yet to charge thy sulphur with a bolt  
That should but rive an oak. Why dost not speak?  
Think'st thou it honourable for a noble man  
Still to remember wrongs?--Daughter, speak you:  
He cares not for your weeping.--Speak thou, boy:  
Perhaps thy childishness will move him more  
Than can our reasons.--There's no man in the world  
More bound to's mother; yet here he lets me prate  
Like one i' the stocks. Thou hast never in thy life  
Show'd thy dear mother any courtesy;  
When she,--poor hen,--fond of no second brood,  
Has cluck'd thee to the wars, and safely home,  
Loaden with honour. Say my request's unjust,  
And spurn me back: but if it be not so,  
Thou art not honest; and the gods will plague thee,  
That thou restrain'st from me the duty which  
To a mother's part belongs.--He turns away:  
Down, ladies: let us shame him with our knees.  
To his surname Coriolanus 'longs more pride  
Than pity to our prayers. Down: an end;  
This is the last.--So we will home to Rome,  
And die among our neighbours.--Nay, behold's:  
This boy, that cannot tell what he would have  
But kneels and holds up hands for fellowship,  
Does reason our petition with more strength  
Than thou hast to deny't.--Come, let us go:  
This fellow had a Volscian to his mother;  
His wife is in Corioli, and his child  
Like him by chance.--Yet give us our despatch:  
I am hush'd until our city be afire,  
And then I'll speak a little.

CORIOLANUS.

[After holding VOLUMNIA by the hands, in silence.]

O mother, mother!

What have you done? Behold, the heavens do ope,

The gods look down, and this unnatural scene

They laugh at. O my mother, mother! O!

You have won a happy victory to Rome;

But for your son,--believe it, O, believe it,

Most dangerously you have with him prevail'd,  
If not most mortal to him. But let it come.--  
Aufidius, though I cannot make true wars,  
I'll frame convenient peace. Now, good Aufidius,  
Were you in my stead, would you have heard  
A mother less? or granted less, Aufidius?

AUFIDIUS.

I was mov'd withal.

CORIOLANUS.

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

AUFIDIUS.

[Aside.] I am glad thou hast set thy mercy and thy honour  
At difference in thee; out of that I'll work  
Myself a former fortune.

[The Ladies make signs to CORIOLANUS.]

CORIOLANUS.

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

[Exeunt.]

SCENE IV. Rome. A public place.

[Enter MENENIUS and SICINIUS.]

MENENIUS.

See you yond coign o' the Capitol,--yond corner-stone?

SICINIUS.

Why, what of that?

MENENIUS.

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

SICINIUS.

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

MENENIUS.

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

SICINIUS.

He loved his mother dearly.

MENENIUS.

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

SICINIUS.

Yes, mercy, if you report him truly.

MENENIUS.

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

SICINIUS.

The gods be good unto us!

MENENIUS.

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

[Enter a MESSENGER

MESSENGER.

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

[Enter a second MESSENGER.]

SICINIUS.

What's the news?

SECOND MESSENGER.

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

SICINIUS.

Friend,

Art thou certain this is true? is't most certain?

SECOND MESSENGER.

As certain as I know the sun is fire:

Where have you lurk'd, that you make doubt of it?  
Ne'er through an arch so hurried the blown tide  
As the recomforted through the gates. Why, hark you!

[Trumpets and hautboys sounded, drums beaten, and shouting within.]

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

[Shouting within.]

MENENIUS.

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

[Shouting and music.]

SICINIUS.

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

SECOND MESSENGER.

Sir, we have all  
Great cause to give great thanks.

SICINIUS.

They are near the city?

MESSENGER.

Almost at point to enter.

SICINIUS.

We'll meet them,  
And help the joy.

[Exeunt.]

SCENE V. Rome. A street near the gate.

[Enter VOLUMNIA, VIRGILIA, VALERIA, &c., accompanied by Senators, Patricians, and Citizens.]

FIRST SENATOR.

Behold our patroness, the life of Rome!  
Call all your tribes together, praise the gods,  
And make triumphant fires; strew flowers before them:  
Unshout the noise that banish'd Marcius,  
Repeal him with the welcome of his mother;  
Cry, 'Welcome, ladies, welcome!'

ALL.

Welcome, ladies,  
Welcome!

[Exeunt.]

SCENE VI. Antium. A public place.

[Enter TULLUS AUFIDIUS, with attendants.]

AUFIDIUS.  
Go tell the lords o' the city I am here:  
Deliver them this paper; having read it,  
Bid them repair to the market-place: where I,  
Even in theirs and in the commons' ears,  
Will vouch the truth of it. Him I accuse  
The city ports by this hath enter'd and  
Intends t' appear before the people, hoping  
To purge himself with words: despatch.

[Exeunt attendants.]

[Enter three or four CONSPIRATORS of AUFIDIUS' faction.]

Most welcome!

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.  
How is it with our general?

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

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

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

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

AUFIDIUS.  
I know it;  
And my pretext to strike at him admits  
A good construction. I rais'd him, and I pawn'd  
Mine honour for his truth: who being so heighten'd,  
He water'd his new plants with dews of flattery,  
Seducing so my friends; and to this end  
He bow'd his nature, never known before  
But to be rough, unswayable, and free.

THIRD CONSPIRATOR.

Sir, his stoutness  
When he did stand for consul, which he lost  
By lack of stooping,--

AUFIDIUS.

That I would have spoken of:  
Being banish'd for't, he came unto my hearth;  
Presented to my knife his throat: I took him;  
Made him joint-servant with me; gave him way  
In all his own desires; nay, let him choose  
Out of my files, his projects to accomplish,  
My best and freshest men; serv'd his designments  
In mine own person; help to reap the fame  
Which he made all his; and took some pride  
To do myself this wrong: till, at the last,  
I seem'd his follower, not partner; and  
He wag'd me with his countenance as if  
I had been mercenary.

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

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

AUFIDIUS.

There was it;--  
For which my sinews shall be stretch'd upon him.  
At a few drops of women's rheum, which are  
As cheap as lies, he sold the blood and labour  
Of our great action: therefore shall he die,  
And I'll renew me in his fall. But, hark!

[Drums and trumpets sound, with great shouts of the people.]

FIRST CONSPIRATOR.

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

SECOND CONSPIRATOR.

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

THIRD CONSPIRATOR.

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

AUFIDIUS.

Say no more:  
Here come the lords.

[Enter the LORDS of the city.]

LORDS.

You are most welcome home.

AUFIDIUS.

I have not deserv'd it.

But, worthy lords, have you with heed perus'd  
What I have written to you?

LORDS.

We have.

FIRST LORD.

And grieve to hear't.

What faults he made before the last, I think  
Might have found easy fines: but there to end  
Where he was to begin, and give away  
The benefit of our levies, answering us  
With our own charge: making a treaty where  
There was a yielding.--This admits no excuse.

AUFIDIUS.

He approaches: you shall hear him.

[Enter CORIOLANUS, with drum and colours; a crowd of Citizens  
with him.]

CORIOLANUS.

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

AUFIDIUS.

Read it not, noble lords;  
But tell the traitor, in the highest degree  
He hath abus'd your powers.

CORIOLANUS.

Traitor!--How now?

AUFIDIUS.

Ay, traitor, Marcius.

CORIOLANUS.

Marcius!

AUFIDIUS.

Ay, Marcius, Caius Marcius! Dost thou think  
I'll grace thee with that robbery, thy stol'n name  
Coriolanus, in Corioli?--

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

CORIOLANUS.

Hear'st thou, Mars?

AUFIDIUS.

Name not the god, thou boy of tears,--

CORIOLANUS.

Ha!

AUFIDIUS.

No more.

CORIOLANUS.

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

FIRST LORD.

Peace, both, and hear me speak.

CORIOLANUS.

Cut me to pieces, Volsces; men and lads,  
Stain all your edges on me.--Boy! False hound!  
If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there,  
That, like an eagle in a dove-cote, I  
Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioli:  
Alone I did it.--Boy!

AUFIDIUS.

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

CONSPIRATORS.

Let him die for't.

CITIZENS.

Tear him to pieces, do it presently!--he killed my son; my  
daughter; he killed my cousin Marcus; he killed my father,--

SECOND LORD.

Peace, ho!--no outrage!--peace!  
The man is noble, and his fame folds in

This orb o' the earth. His last offences to us  
Shall have judicious hearing.--Stand, Aufidius,  
And trouble not the peace.

CORIO LANUS.

O that I had him,  
With six Aufidiuses, or more, his tribe,  
To use my lawful sword!

AUFIDIUS.

Insolent villain!

CONSPIRATORS.

Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill him!

[AUFIDIUS and the CONSPIRATORS draw, and kill CORIO LANUS, who  
falls. AUFIDIUS stands on him.]

LORDS.

Hold, hold, hold, hold!

AUFIDIUS.

My noble masters, hear me speak.

FIRST LORD.

O Tullus,--

SECOND LORD.

Thou hast done a deed whereat valour will weep.

THIRD LORD.

Tread not upon him.--Masters all, be quiet;  
Put up your swords.

AUFIDIUS.

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

FIRST LORD.

Bear from hence his body,  
And mourn you for him. Let him be regarded  
As the most noble corse that ever herald  
Did follow to his um.

SECOND LORD.

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

AUFIDIUS.

My rage is gone;  
And I am struck with sorrow.--Take him up:--  
Help, three o' the chiefest soldiers; I'll be one.--  
Beat thou the drum, that it speak mournfully;  
Trail your steel pikes. Though in this city he

Hath widow'd and unchilded many a one,  
Which to this hour bewail the injury,  
Yet he shall have a noble memory.--  
Assist.

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

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