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# THE NEW TEMPLE SHAKESPEARE



Edited by M. R. Ridley, M.A.



# CORIOLANUS

by William Shakespeare



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## Editor's General Note

**The Text.** The editor has kept before him the aim of presenting to the modern reader the nearest possible approximation to what Shakespeare actually wrote. The text is therefore conservative, and is based on the earliest reliable printed text. But to avoid distraction (*a*) the spelling is modernised, and (*b*) a limited number of universally accepted emendations is admitted without comment. Where a Quarto text exists as well as the First Folio the passages which occur only in the Quarto are enclosed in square brackets [ ] and those which occur only in the Folio in brace brackets { }.

**Scene Division.** The rapid continuity of the Elizabethan curtainless production is lost by the 'traditional' scene divisions. Where there is an essential difference of place these scene divisions are retained. Where on the other hand the change of place is insignificant the scene division is indicated only by a space on the page. For ease of reference, however, the 'traditional' division is retained at the head of the page and in line numbering.

**Notes.** Passages on which there are notes are indicated by a † in the margin.

**Punctuation** adheres more closely than has been usual to the 'Elizabethan' punctuation of the early texts. It is often therefore more indicative of the way in which the lines were to be delivered than of their syntactical construction.

**Glossaries** are arranged on a somewhat novel principle, not alphabetically, but in the order in which the words or phrases occur. The editor is much indebted to Mr J. N. Bryson for his collaboration in the preparation of the glossaries.





## Preface

**The Text.** *Coriolanus* was first published in the Folio of 1623, appearing in the Stationers' Registers under the date November 8, 1623, among the sixteen plays not previously entered to other men. Opinions have differed very widely as to the goodness or badness of the Folio text. *E.g.*, Knight regarded it as "wonderfully accurate"; R. G. White calls it "the worst printed play in the whole First Folio," and becoming almost lyrical in abuse says that "every page is spotted with corruption"; and even the Cambridge editors admit that it "abounds with errors." That the Folio compositor was exasperatingly perverse in his line divisions the most conservative editor must admit; and that many passages in the play are reluctant to yield up their meaning, if we go looking for it with our imaginations asleep and a book of grammar and syntax in our hands, most readers will discover. But before we seek a fallacious refuge from the compositor in the pother and welter of editorial comment and emendation in which the unhappy play is in danger of disappearing from view, we should, I think, do well to listen to some very wise comments of Mr G. S. Gordon. "The editors, one encouraging another, have exaggerated both their difficulties and their exploits. Much less has been done to improve the text than their foot-notes give out, and much less was needed than has been done. They found the play abrupt and irregular, full of fierce rapidities of speech and cultural dissonance of metre. They have left it, after two centuries of tidying, not yet quite neat, but neater and tidier certainly than it ever left its author's hands. . . . Now this may be to improve the play, but it is not to correct it. Editors have assumed too

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readily that they were correcting errors when they were only making a difficult play more readable. The play is rough; but it was not meant to be smooth. It is difficult; but it was not meant to be easy. And it is certainly not corrupt. A corrupt text should contain corrupt passages. But there are only three such passages in the play—I. iii. 43; I. ix. 46; II. iii. 242—and the last of these is a slip.”

**Date of Composition.** There is no external evidence whatever. The internal evidence of supposed allusions is of the flimsiest; some pin their faith to famine, some to mulberries, some to the death of Shakespeare's mother, and some to the particular edition of North's *Plutarch* which he is supposed to have used; they are at one only in their failure to convince anyone but themselves that they are advancing more than interesting possibilities. But the general consensus of opinion, which is backed by metrical tests, puts it certainly in the last period of Shakespeare's dramatic career, and probably in the years 1609-10.

**Source of the Story.** Here on the other hand we are on firm ground. As with his other Roman plays Shakespeare took the framework, and some of the details, from 'North's *Plutarch*'; *i.e.* from Thomas North's translation into English of Bishop Amyot's translation into French of Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*. Though it is full of interest, there is no space here for a full examination of the way in which Shakespeare modified the narrative which he found in North to fit it for his own dramatic purpose. But it is possible, and also interesting, to illustrate the way in which Shakespeare used North for details of his design.

Here are two of the famous passages from North: "I am *Caius*

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*Martius, who hath done to thyselfe particularly, and to all the Volsces generally, great hurt and mischief, which I cannot denie for my surname of Coriolanus that I beare. For I never had other benefite nor recompence, of all the true and painful service I have done, and the extreme dangers I have bene in, but this only surname: a good memorie and witnessse of the malice and displeasure thou shouldest beare me. Indeede the name onely remaineth with me: for the rest, the envie and crueltie of the people of Rome have taken from me, by the sufferance of the dastardly nobilitie and magistrates, who have forsaken me, and let me be banished by the people. This extremitie hath now driven me to come as a poor suter, to take thy chimney harth, not of any hope I have to save my life thereby. For if I had feard death, I would not have come hither to have put my life in hazard: but prickt forward with spite and desire I have to be revenged of them that thus have banished me, whom now I begin to be avenged on putting my person betweene thy enemies. Wherefore, if thou hast any heart to be wrecked of the injures thy enemies have done thee, speed thee now, and let my miserie serve thy turne, and so use it, as my service may be a benefite to the Volsces: promising thee that I will fight with better good will for all you, then I did when I was against you, knowing that they fight more valiantly, that know the force of the enemy, then such as have never proved it. And if it be so that thou dare not, and that thou art weary to prove fortune any more: then am I also wearie to live any longer."*

“After he had thus lovingly received them, and perceiving that his mother *Volumnia* would begin to speake to him, he called the chiefest of the counsell of the Volsces to heare what she would say. Then she spake in this sort. *If we belde our peace (my sonne) and determined not to speake, the state of our poore bodies, and present sight of our raiment, would easily bewray to thee what life we have led at home, since thy exile*

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and abode abroad. But *thinke now with thy selfe, how much more unfortunately, then all the women living we are come hitber*, considering that the sight which should be most pleasant to all other to behold, spightfull fortune hath made most fearefull to us : making my selfe to see my sonne, and my daughter here, her husband, besieging the walles of his native countrie. So as that which is the onely *comfort to all other* in their adversitie and miserie, *to pray unto the gods*, and to call to them for aide : is the onely thing which plungeth us into most deepe perplexitie. For we cannot (alas) together pray, *both for victorie, for our countrie, and for safetie of thy life also* : but a world of grievous curses, yea more then any mortall enimie can heape upon us, are forcibly wrapt up in our praiers. For the bitter sop of most harde choice is offered thy wife and children, to forgo the one of the two ; either to lose *the person of thy selfe, or the nurse of their native countrie*. For my selfe (my sonne) I am determind not to tarie, till fortune in my life time do make an end of this warre. For *if I cannot perswade thee*, rather to do good unto both parties, *then to overthrow and destroy the one*, preferring love and nature, before the malice and calamitie of warres : thou shalt see, my sonne, and *trust unto it, thou shalt no sooner marche forward to assault thy countrie*, but thy foote shall *treade upon thy mothers wombe, that brought thee first into this world*. And I may not deferre to see the day, either that my sonne *be led prisoner in triumph* by his naturall countrymen, or that he himselfe *do triumphe of them*, and of his naturall countrie. For *if it were so, that my request tended to save thy countrie, in destroying the Volsces* : I must confesse, thou wouldst hardly and doubtfully resolve on that. For as to destroy thy naturall countrie, it is altogether unmeete and unlawfull : so were it not just, and lesse honorable, to betray those that put their trust in thee. But *my only demaund consisteth, to make a gaine deliverie of all evils, which delivereth*

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equall benefit and safetie, both to the one and the other, but most honorable for the Volsces. For it shall appeare, that having victorie in their hands, they have of speciall favour granted us singular graces : peace, and amitie, albeit themselves have no lesse part of both, then we. Of which good, if so it came to passe, thy selfe is the onely author, and so hast thou the only honour. But if it faile, and fall out contrarie : thy selfe alone deservedly shall carie the shamefull reproach and burthen of either partie. So, though *the end of warre be uncertaine*, yet *this notwithstanding is most certaine : that if it be thy chance to conquer, this benefit shalt thou reape of thy goodly conquest*, to be chronicled the plague and destroyer of thy countrie. And if fortune also overthrow thee, then the world will say, that through desire to revenge thy private injuries, thou hast for ever undone thy good friends, who did most lovingly and courteouslie receive thee. *Martius* gave good eare unto his mothers words, without interrupting her speach at all : and after she had said what she would, he held his peace a prety while, and answered not a word. Hereupon she began againe to speak unto him, and said, My sonne, why doest thou not answer me ? doest thou thinke it good altogether to give place unto thy choller and desire of revenge, and thinkest thou it no honestie for thee to graunt thy mothers request, in so weighty a cause ? *doest thou take it honorable for a noble man, to remember the wrongs and injuries done him* : and doest not in like case thinke it an honest noble mans parte, to be thankfull for the goodnesse that parents do shew to their children, acknowledging the dutie and reverence they ought to beare unto them ? *No man living is more bound to shew himselfe thankfull in all parts and respects, then thy selfe* : who so unnaturally sheweth all ingratitude. Moreover (my sonne) thou hast sorely taken of thy country, exacting grievous paiments upon them, in revenge of the injuries offered

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thee : besides, *thou hast not hitherto shewed thy poore mother any courtesie.* And therefore, it is not only honest, but due unto me, that without compulsion I should obtaine my so just and reasonable request of thee. But since by reason I cannot perswade thee to it, to what purpose do I defer my last hope ? And with these words, her selfe, his wife and children, fell downe upon their knees before him. *Martius* seeing that, could refraine no longer, but went straight and lift her up, crying out : Oh mother, what have you done to me ? And holding her hard by the right hand, *ob mother, said he, you have wonne a happy victorie for your countrie, but mortall and unhappy for your sonne :* for I see my selfe vanquished by you alone."

Any reader who will compare those passages with IV. v. 66-96 and V. iii. 92-189 will realise not only the extent of Shakespeare's debt to North, but also the skill with which he uses his borrowings.

### Criticisms.

*Johnson.*—The tragedy of *Coriolanus* is one of the most amusing of our author's performances. The old man's merriment in Menenius ; the lofty lady's dignity in Volumnia ; the bridal modesty in Virgilia ; the patrician and military haughtiness in Coriolanus ; the plebeian malignity and tribunitian insolence in Brutus and Sicinius make a very pleasing and interesting variety, and the various revolutions of the hero's fortune fill the mind with anxious curiosity. There is, perhaps, too much bustle in the first Act and too little in the last.

*William Hazlitt.*—Coriolanus himself is a complete character ; his love of reputation, his contempt of popular opinion, his pride and modesty are consequences of each other. His pride consists in the

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inflexible sternness of his will ; his love of glory is a determined desire to bear down all opposition, and to extort the admiration both of friends and foes. His contempt for popular favour, his unwillingness to hear his own praises, spring from the same source. He cannot contradict the praises that are bestowed upon him ; therefore he is impatient at hearing them. He would enforce the good opinion of others by his actions, but does not want their acknowledgments in words.

‘ Pray now, no more : my mother,  
Who has a charter to extol her blood,  
When she does praise me, grieves me.’

His magnanimity is of the same kind. He admires in an enemy that courage which he honours in himself ; he places himself on the hearth of Aufidius with the same confidence that he would have met him in the field, and feels that by putting himself in his power he takes from him all temptation for using it against him.

*Swinburne.*—I cannot but think that enough at least of time has been spent if not wasted by able and even by eminent men on examination of *Coriolanus* with regard to its political aspect or bearing upon social questions. It is from first to last, for all its turmoil of battle and clamour of contentious factions, rather a private and domestic than a public or historical tragedy. As in *Julius Cæsar* the family had been so wholly subordinated to the state, and all personal interests so utterly dominated by the preponderance of national duties, that even the sweet and sublime figure of Portia passing in her ‘awful loveliness’ was but as a profile half caught in the background of an episode, so here on the contrary the whole force of the final impression is not that of a



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conflict between patrician and plebeian, but solely that of a match of passions played out for life and death between a mother and a son. The partisans of oligarchic or democratic systems may wrangle at their will over the supposed evidences of Shakespeare's prejudice against this creed and prepossession in favour of that. A third bystander may rejoice in the proof thus established of his impartial indifference towards either; it is all nothing to the real point in hand. The subject of the whole play is not the exile's revolt, the rebel's repentance, or the traitor's reward, but above all it is the son's tragedy. The inscription on the plinth of this tragic statue is simply to *Volumnia Victrix*.

A loftier or a more perfect piece of man's work was never done in all the world than this tragedy of *Coriolanus*; the one fit and crowning epithet for its companion or successor is that bestowed by Coleridge—"the most wonderful."<sup>1</sup>

*A. C. Bradley.*—*Coriolanus* is beyond doubt among the latest of Shakespeare's tragedies; there is some reason for thinking it the last. Like all those that succeeded *Hamlet*, it is a tragedy of vehement passion; and in none of them are more striking revolutions of fortune displayed. It is full of power, and almost every one feels it to be a noble work. We may say of it, as of its hero, that, if not one of Shakespeare's greatest creations, it is certainly one of his biggest. . . . Dr Johnson observes that "the tragedy of *Coriolanus* is one of the most amusing of our author's performances." By "amusing" he did not mean "mirth-provoking"; he meant that in *Coriolanus* a lively interest is excited and sustained by the variety of the events and characters; and this is true. But we may add that the play contains a good deal that is amusing in the current

<sup>1</sup> From *A Study of Shakespeare* by permission of Messrs W. Heinemann.

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sense of the word. When the people appear as individuals they are frequently more or less comical. Shakespeare always enjoyed the inconsequence of the uneducated mind, and its tendency to express a sound meaning in an absurd form. Again, the talk of the servants with one another and with the muffled hero, and the conversation of the sentinels with Menenius, are amusing. There is a touch of comedy in the contrast between Volumnia and Virgilia when we see them on occasions not too serious. And then, not only at the beginning, as in *Plutarch*, but throughout the story we meet with that pleasant and wise old gentleman Menenius, whose humour tells him how to keep the peace while he gains his point, and to say without offence what the hero cannot say without raising a storm. Perhaps no one else in the play is regarded from beginning to end with such unmingled approval, and this is not lessened when the failure of his embassy to Coriolanus makes him the subject as well as the author of mirth. If we regard the drama from this point of view we find that it differs from almost all the tragedies, though it has a certain likeness to *Antony and Cleopatra*. What is amusing in it is, for the most part, simply amusing, and has no tragic tinge. It is not like the gibes of Hamlet at Polonius, or the jokes of the clown who, we remember, is digging Ophelia's grave, or that humour of Iago which for us is full of menace; and who could dream of comparing it with the jesting of Lear's fool? Even that Shakespearean audacity, the interruption of Volumnia's speech by the hero's little son, makes one laugh almost without reserve. And all this helps to produce the characteristic tone of this tragedy. . . .

Now the nobleness of his nature is at work here. He is not tyrannical; the charge brought against him of aiming at a tyranny is silly. He is an aristocrat. And Shakespeare has put decisively aside the statement of Plutarch that he was "churlish, uncivil, and

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altogether unfit for any man's conversation." Shakespeare's hero, though he feels his superiority to his fellow-patricians, always treats them as equals. He is never rude or overbearing. He speaks to them with the simple directness or the bluff familiarity of a comrade. He does not resent their advice, criticism, or reproof. He shows no trace of envy or jealousy, or even of satisfaction at having surpassed them. The suggestion of the tribunes that he is willing to serve under Cominius because failure in war will be credited to Cominius, and success in war to himself, shows only the littleness of their own minds. The patricians are his fellows in a community of virtue—of a courage, fidelity, and honour, which cannot fail them because they are 'true-bred,' though the bright ideal of such virtue become perfect still urges them on. But the plebeians, in his eyes, are destitute of this virtue, and therefore have no place in this community. All they care for is food in peace, looting in war, flattery from their demagogues; and they will not even clean their teeth. To ask anything of them is to insult not merely himself but the virtues that he worships. To give them a real share in citizenship is treason to Rome; for Rome means these virtues. They are not Romans, they are the rats of Rome.

He is very unjust to them, and his ideal, though high, is also narrow. But he is magnificently true to it, and even when he most repels us we feel this and glory in him. He is never more true to it than when he tried to be false; and this is the scene where his superiority in nobleness is most apparent. He, who had said of his enemy, "I hate him worse than a promise-breaker," is urged to save himself and his friends by promises that he means to break. To his mother's argument that he ought no more to mind deceiving the people than outwitting an enemy in war, he cannot give the obvious answer, for he does not really count the people his fellow-

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countrymen. But the proposal that he should descend to lying or flattering astounds him. He feels that if he does so he will never be himself again ; that his mind will have taken on an inherent baseness and no mere simulated one. And he is sure, as we are, that he simply cannot do what is required of him. When at last he consents to try, it is solely because his mother bids him and he cannot resist her chiding. Often he reminds us of a huge boy ; and here he acts like a boy whose sense of honour is finer than his mother's, but who is too simple and too noble to frame the thought.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from *A Miscellany* by permission of the publishers, Messrs Macmillan.



**THE TRAGEDY OF CORIOLANUS**

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

CAIUS MARTIUS, afterwards CAIUS MARTIUS CORIOLANUS

TITUS LARTIUS, }  
COMINIUS, } generals against the Volscians.

MENENIUS AGRIPPA, friend to Coriolanus.

SICINIUS VELUTUS, }  
JUNIUS BRUTUS, } tribunes of the people.

YOUNG MARTIUS, son of 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, Ædiles, Lictors, Soldiers,  
Citizens, Messengers, Servants to Aufidius, and other  
Attendants.

SCENE : *Rome and the neighbourhood ; Corioles and the  
neighbourhood ; Antium.*

# THE TRAGEDY OF CORIOLANUS

## Act First

### SCENE I

*Rome. A street*

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

*First Cit.* Before we proceed any further, hear me speak.

*All.* Speak, speak.

*First Cit.* You are all resolv'd rather to die than to  
famish ?

*All.* Resolv'd, resolv'd.

*First Cit.* First, you know, Caius Martius is chief enemy  
to the people.

*All.* We know 't, we know 't.

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

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

*Sec. Cit.* One word, good citizens.

*First Cit.* We are accounted poor citizens, the patricians



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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 ; 20 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.

*Sec. Cit.* Would you proceed especially against Caius Martius ?

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

*Sec. Cit.* Consider you what services he has done for his country ? 30

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

*Sec. Cit.* Nay, but speak not maliciously.

*First Cit.* I say unto you, what he hath done famously, he did it to that end : though soft-conscienc'd 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.

*Sec. Cit.* What he cannot help in his nature, you account a  
vice in him ; you must in no way say he is covetous. 40

*First Cit.* If I must not, I need not be barren of accusa-  
tions ; he hath faults (with surplus) to tire in repe-  
tition. (*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 Cit.* Soft, who comes here ?

*Enter Menenius Agrippa*

*Sec. Cit.* Worthy Menenius Agrippa, one that hath always  
lov'd the people. 50

*First Cit.* He 's one honest enough ; would all the rest  
were so !

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

*Sec. Cit.* 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.

*Men.* Why, masters, my good friends, mine honest  
neighbours, 60

Will you undo yourselves ?

*Sec. Cit.* We cannot, sir, we are undone already.

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*Men.* 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, 70  
The gods, not the patricians, make it, and  
Your knees to them (not arms) must help. Alack,  
You are transported by calamity  
Thither, where more attends you, and you slander  
The helms o' the state ; who care for you like fathers,  
When you curse them, as enemies.

*Sec. Cit.* Care for us ? True indeed, they ne'er car'd for  
us yet. Suffer us to famish, and their store-houses  
cramm'd with grain ; make edicts for usury, to  
support usurers ; repeal daily any wholesome act 80  
establish'd 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.

*Men.* 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.

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*Sec. Cit.* 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.

*Men.* 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 the other instruments  
 Did see, and hear, devise, instruct, walk, feel, 100  
 And, mutually participate, did minister  
 Unto the appetite, and affection common  
 Of the whole body. The belly answer'd—

*Sec. Cit.* Well, sir, what answer made the belly ?

*Men.* 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, 110  
 As you malign our senators, for that  
 They are not such as you.

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

*Men.* What then?  
'Fore me, this fellow speaks! what then? what then?

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

*Men.* Well, what then? 120

*Sec. Cit.* The former agents, if they did complain,  
What could the belly answer?

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

*Sec. Cit.* You're long about it.

*Men.* 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, 130  
Because I am the store-house and the shop  
Of the whole body: but, if you do remember,

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

*First Cit.* Ay sir, well, well.

*Men.* ' Though all at once cannot 140

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 Cit.* It was an answer : how apply you this ?

*Men.* 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 150

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 Cit.* I the great toe ! why the great toe ?

*Men.* For that being one o' the lowest, basest, poorest,

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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 ;      160  
The one side must have bale.

*Enter Caius Martius*

Hail, noble Martius !

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

*Sec. Cit.* We have ever your good word.

*Mar.* 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,      170  
Than is the coal of fire upon the ice,  
Or hailstone in the sun. Your virtue is  
To make him worthy whose offence subdues him,  
And curse that justice did it. Who deserves greatness  
Deserves your hate ; and your affections are  
A sick man's appetite ; who desires most that  
Which would increase his evil. He that depends

Upon your favours swims with fins of lead,  
 And hews down oaks, with rushes. Hang ye! Trust ye?  
 With every minute you do change a mind, 180  
 And call him noble that was now your hate;  
 Him vile that was your garland. What's the matter,  
 That in these several places of the city  
 You cry against the noble senate, who,  
 (Under the gods) keep you in awe, which else  
 Would feed on one another? What's their seeking?

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

*Mar.* Hang 'em! They say?  
 They'll sit by the fire, and presume to know  
 What's done i' the Capitol; who's like to rise, 190  
 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 cobbl'd 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.

*Men.* Nay, these are almost thoroughly persuaded;



CORIOLANUS

For though abundantly they lack discretion, 200  
Yet are they passing cowardly. But I beseech you,  
What says the other troop?

*Mar.* They are dissolv'd: 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, 211  
Shouting their emulation.

*Men.* What is granted them?

*Mar.* 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.

*Men.* This is strange.

*Mar.* Go get you home, you fragments! 220

*Enter a Messenger, hastily*

*Mes.* Where 's Caius Martius ?

*Mar.* Here : what 's the matter ?

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

*Mar.* 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 Sen.* Martius, 'tis true, that you have lately told us,

The Volsces are in arms.

*Mar.* They have a leader,

Tullus Aufidius, that will put you to 't.

I sin in envying his nobility ;

And were I any thing but what I am,

I would wish me only he.

*Com.* You have fought together ? 230

*Mar.* Were half to half the world by the ears, and he

Upon my party, I 'ld revolt, to make

Only my wars with him : he is a lion

That I am proud to hunt.

*First Sen.* Then, worthy Martius,

Attend upon Cominius to these wars.

*Com.* It is your former promise.

*Mar.* Sir, it is,

And I am constant. Titus Lartius, thou

## CORIOLANUS

Shalt see me once more strike at Tullus' face.

What, art thou stiff? stand'st out?

*Tit.* No, Caius Martius ;  
I'll lean upon one crutch, and fight with t' other, 240  
Ere stay behind this business.

*Men.* O, true-bred !

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

*Tit.* (*to Com.*) Lead you on.  
(*to Mar.*) Follow Cominius, we must follow you,  
Right worthy you priority.

*Com.* Noble Martius !

*First Sen. (to the Citizens)* Hence to your homes, be gone !

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

*Citizens steal away. Exeunt all  
but Sicinius and Brutus*

*Sic.* Was ever man so proud as is this Martius ? 250

*Bru.* He has no equal.

*Sic.* When we were chosen tribunes for the people,—

*Bru.* Mark'd you his lip and eyes ?

*Sic.* Nay, but his taunts.

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

*Sic.* Bemock the modest moon.

*Bru.* The present wars devour him ; he is grown  
Too proud to be so valiant.

*Sic.* 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 260  
Under Cominius.

*Bru.* Fame, at the which he aims,  
In whom already he 's 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 the utmost of a man, and giddy censure  
Will then cry out of Martius ' O, if he  
Had borne the business !'

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

*Bru.* Come : 270  
Half all Cominius' honours are to Martius,  
Though Martius earn'd them not ; and all his faults  
To Martius shall be honours, though indeed  
In aught he merit not.

*Sic.* Let 's hence, and hear

CORIOLANUS

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

*Bru.*

Let 's along.

*Exeunt*

SCENE II

*Corioles. The Senate-house*

*Enter Tullus Aufidius, with Senators of Corioles*

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

*Auf.*

Is it not yours ?

What ever have been thought on in this state,  
That could be brought to bodily act ere Rome  
Had circumvention ? 'Tis not four days gone  
Since I heard thence : these are the words : I think  
I have the letter here : yes, here it is :  
(*reads*) ' They have press'd a power, but it is not  
known

Whether for east or west : the dearth is great,  
The people mutinous : and it is rumour'd,  
Cominius, Martius your old enemy,  
(Who is of Rome worse hated than of you)

10

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

*Auf.* Nor did you think it folly, 20  
 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.

*Sec. Sen.* Noble Aufidius,  
 Take your commission, hie you to your bands,  
 Let us alone to guard Corioles :  
 If they set down before 's, for the remove  
 Bring up your army ; but, I think, you 'll find 30  
 They 've not prepar'd for us.

*Auf.* 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.

## CORIOLANUS

If we and Caius Martius chance to meet,  
'Tis sworn between us, we shall ever strike  
Till one can do no more.

*All.* The gods assist you !

*Auf.* And keep your honours safe !

*First Sen.* Farewell.

*Sec. Sen.* Farewell.

*All.* Farewell. *Exeunt*

### SCENE III

*Rome. A room in Martius' house*

*Enter Volumnia and Virgilia : they set them down on two  
low stools, and sew*

*Vol.* 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 10

such a person, that it was no better than picture-like to hang by the wall, if renown made it not stir, was pleas'd to let him seek danger where he was like to find fame. To a cruel war I sent him, from whence he return'd, 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 prov'd himself a man.

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

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

*Enter a Gentlewoman*

*Gen.* Madam, the Lady Valeria is come to visit you.

*Vir.* Beseech you give me leave to retire myself.

*Vol.* Indeed you shall not.

Methinks I hear hither your husband's drum ;  
See him pluck Aufidius down by the hair ; 30  
As children from a bear, the Volsces shunning  
him :

Methinks I see him stamp thus, and call thus :  
' Come on you cowards, you were got in fear,



CORIOLANUS

Though you were born in Rome : ' his bloody brow  
With his mail'd hand then wiping, forth he goes,  
Like to a harvest-man, that 's task'd to mow  
Or all, or lose his hire.

*Vir.* His bloody brow ? O Jupiter, no blood !

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

*Vir.* Heavens bless my lord from fell Aufidius !

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

*Enter Valeria, with an Usher and Gentlewoman*

*Val.* My ladies both, good day to you.

*Vol.* Sweet madam.

*Vir.* I am glad to see your ladyship. 50

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

*Vir.* I thank your ladyship ; well, good madam.

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

*Val.* 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 con-  
 firm'd countenance. I saw him run after a gilded 60  
 butterfly, and when he caught it, he let it go again,  
 and after it again, and over and over he comes, and  
 up again ; catch'd it again : or whether his fall  
 enrag'd him, or how 'twas, he did so set his teeth,  
 and tear it ; O, I warrant how he mammock'd it !

*Val.* One on 's father's moods.

*Val.* Indeed, la, 'tis a noble child.

*Vir.* A crack, madam.

*Val.* Come, lay aside your stitchery, I must have you play  
 the idle huswife with me this afternoon. 70

*Vir.* No, good madam, I will not out of doors.

*Val.* Not out of doors ?

*Val.* She shall, she shall.

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

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

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

*Val.* Why, I pray you ? 80

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

*Val.* You would be another Penelope : yet they say, all †

## CORIOLANUS

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.

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

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

*Vir.* O, good madam, there can be none yet.

90

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

*Vir.* Indeed, madam ?

*Val.* In earnest, it's true ; I heard a senator speak it.

Thus it is : the Volsces have an army forth, against whom Cominius the general is gone, with one part of our Roman power. Your lord, and Titus Lartius, are set down before their city Corioles, they nothing doubt prevailing, and to make it brief wars. This is true on mine honour, and so I pray go with us.

100

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

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

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

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

*Val.* Well, then farewell.

*Exeunt* 110

## SCENES IV-X

*Before and in Corioles*

*Enter, with drum and colours, Martius, Titus Lartius,  
Captains and Soldiers. To them a Messenger*

*Mar.* Yonder comes news : a wager they have met.

*Lar.* My horse to yours, no.

*Mar.* 'Tis done.

*Lar.* Agreed.

*Mar.* Say, has our general met the enemy ?

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

*Lar.* So, the good horse is mine.

*Mar.* I 'll buy him of you.

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

*Mar.* How far off lie these armies ?

*Mes.* Within this mile and half.

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

Now Mars, I prithee make us quick in work, 10

That we with smoking swords may march from hence

CORIOLANUS

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

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

Tullus Aufidius, is he within your walls ?

*First Sen.* No, nor a man that fears you less than he, †

That's lesser than a little. Hark, our drums

*Drum afar off*

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. Hark you, far off

*Alarum far off*

There is Aufidius. List what work he makes 20  
Amongst your cloven army.

*Mar.* O, they are at it !

*Lar.* Their noise be our instruction. Ladders, ho !

*Enter the army of the Volsces*

*Mar.* 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.

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

**Mar.** All the contagion of the south, light on you, 30  
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; 40  
If you'll stand fast, we'll beat them to their wives,  
As they us to our trenches. †

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

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

*Enters the gates*

**First Sol.** Fool-hardiness, not I.

CORIOLANUS

*Sec. Sol.* Nor I.

*Martius is shut in*

*First Sol.* See, they have shut him in.

*All.*

To the pot, I warrant him.

*Alarum continues*

*Re-enter Titus Lartius*

*Lar.* What is become of Martius ?

*All.*

Slain, sir, doubtless.

*First Sol.* Following the fliers at the very heels,

50

With them he enters ; who, upon the sudden,  
Clapp'd to their gates, he is himself alone,  
To answer all the city.

*Lar.*

O noble fellow !

Who sensibly outdares his senseless sword,  
And when it bows, standst up ! Thou art left,  
Martius :

A carbuncle entire, as big as thou art,  
Were not so rich a jewel. Thou wast a soldier  
Even to Cato's wish, not fierce and terrible  
Only in strokes, but with thy grim looks, and  
The thunder-like percussion of thy sounds,  
Thou mad'st thine enemies shake, as if the world  
Were feverous, and did tremble.

60

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

*First Sol.*

Look, sir.

*Lar.*

O, 'tis Martius !

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

*They fight, and all enter the city*

*Within Corioles. A street*

*Enter certain Romans, with spoils*

*First Rom.* This will I carry to Rome.

*Sec. Rom.* And I this.

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

*Alarum continues still afar off*

*Enter Martius and Titus Lartius with a trumpet*

*Mar.* 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, 10  
 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.

*Lar.* Worthy sir, thou bleed'st,



## CORIOLANUS

Thy exercise hath been too violent,  
For a second course of fight.

*Mar.* 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.

*Lar.* Now the fair goddess, Fortune, **20**  
Fall deep in love with thee, and her great charms  
Misguide thy opposers' swords, bold gentleman :  
Prosperity be thy page !

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

*Lar.* Thou worthiest Martius ! *Exit Martius*  
Go sound thy trumpet in the market-place,  
Call thither all the officers o' the town,  
Where they shall know our mind. Away !

*Exeunt*

*Near the camp of Cominius*

*Enter Cominius, as it were in retire, with Soldiers*

*Com.* Breathe you, my friends, well fought, we are come off,  
Like Romans, neither foolish in our stands,



CORIOLANUS

*Enter Martius*

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

*Mar.* Come I too late?

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

*Mar.* Come I too late?

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

*Mar.* 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!

30

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

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

*Com.* Where is that slave

Which told me they had beat you to your trenches ? 40  
Where is he ? call him hither.

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

*Com.* But how prevail'd you ?

*Mar.* 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 ?

*Com.* Martius,  
We have at disadvantage fought, and did  
Retire to win our purpose. 50

*Mar.* How lies their battle ? know you on which side  
They have plac'd their men of trust ?

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

*Mar.* 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

CORIOLANUS

Against Aufidius and his Antiates ; 60  
 And that you not delay the present, but,  
 Filling the air with swords advanc'd and darts,  
 We prove this very hour.

*Cem.* 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.

*Mar.* 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 70  
 Lesser his person than an ill report ;  
 If any think brave death outweighs bad life,  
 And that his country's dearer than himself,  
 Let him alone—or so many so minded—  
 Wave thus to express his disposition,  
 And follow Martius.

*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 80

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.

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

*The gates of Corioles*

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

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

*Lien.* Fear not our care, sir.

*Lar.* Hence ; and shut your gates upon 's.

Our guider, come, to the Roman camp conduct us.

*Exeunt. Alarum, as in battle*

CORIOLANUS

*Enter, from opposite sides, Martius and Aufidius*

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

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

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

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

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

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

*They fight, and certain Volsces come in the aid of  
Aufidius. Martius fights till they be driven in  
breathless*

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

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

*Com.* If I should tell thee o'er this thy day's work,  
 Thou 'lt 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 din'd before.

10

*Enter Titus Lartius, with his power, from the pursuit*

*Lar.* O general ;

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

*Mar.* 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,



## CORIOLANUS

Induc'd as you have been, that 's for my country :  
He that has but effected his good will  
Hath overta'en mine act.

*Com.* You shall not be  
The grave of your deserving, Rome must know 20  
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.

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

*Com.* Should they not,  
Well might they fester 'gainst ingratitude, 30  
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.

*Mar.* 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. 40

*A long flourish. They all cry 'Martius! Martius!'  
cast up their caps and lances: Cominius and  
Lartius stand bare*

*Mar.* 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 an overture 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 50  
In acclamations hyperbolic,  
As if I lov'd my little should be dieted  
In praises, sauc'd with lies.

*Com.* 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 Martius

## CORIOLANUS

Wears this war's garland : in token of the which, 60  
My noble steed, known to the camp, I give him,  
With all his trim belonging ; and from this time,  
For what he did before Corioles, call him,  
With all the applause and clamour of the host,  
*Marcus Caius Coriolanus.* Bear  
The addition nobly ever !

*Flourish. Trumpets sound, and drums*

*All. Marcus Caius Coriolanus !*

*Cor.* I will go wash ;  
And when my face is fair, you shall perceive  
Whether I blush or no : howbeit, I thank you, 70.  
I mean to stride your steed, and at all times  
To undercrest your good addition,  
To the fairness of my power.

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

*Lar.* I shall, my lord.

*Cor.* The gods begin to mock me : I, that now  
Refus'd most princely gifts, am bound to beg 80  
Of my lord general.

*Com.* Take 't, 'tis yours : what is 't ?

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

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

*Lar.* Martius, his name ?

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

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

*Exeunt*

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

*Auf.* The town is ta'en !

*First Sol.* 'Twill be deliver'd back

CORIOLANUS

On good condition.

*Auf.* 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, Martius,  
I have fought with thee ; so often hast thou beat me :  
And wouldst do so, I think, should we encounter  
As often as we eat. By the elements,  
If e'er again I meet him beard to beard, 10  
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 Sol.* He 's the devil.

*Auf.* Bolder, though not so subtle : my valour 's poison'd, †  
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 ; 20  
Embarquements all of fury, shall lift up  
Their rotten privilege and custom 'gainst  
My hate to Martius. Where I find him, were it  
At home, upon my brother's guard, even there,

Against the hospitable canon, would I  
 Wash my fierce hand in 's heart. Go you to the city,  
 Learn how 'tis held, and what they are that must  
 Be hostages for Rome.

*First Sol.* Will not you go ?

*Auf.* I am attended at the cypress grove : I pray you  
 ('Tis south the city mills) bring me word thither 30  
 How the world goes ; that to the pace of it  
 I may spur on my journey.

*First Sol.* I shall, sir. *Exeunt*

## Act Second

### SCENE I

*Rome. A public place*

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

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

*Bru.* Good or bad ?

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

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

## CORIOLANUS

*Men.* Pray you, who does the wolf love ?

*Sic.* The lamb.

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

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

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

*Both.* Well, sir.

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

*Bru.* He 's poor in no one fault, but stor'd with all.

*Sic.* Especially in pride.

*Bru.* And topping all others in boasting.

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

*Both.* Why, how are we censur'd ?

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

*Both.* Well, well, sir, well.

*Men.* Why, 'tis no great matter : for a very little thief of occasion will rob you of a great deal of patience : give your dispositions the reins, and be angry at your pleasures ; at the least, if you take it as a 30

pleasure to you in being so : you blame Martius for being proud ?

*Bru.* We do it not alone, sir.

*Men.* 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 !

40

*Both.* What then, sir ?

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

*Sic.* Menenius, you are known well enough too.

*Men.* 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

50



## CORIOLANUS

crooked face at it. I can say your worships have †  
deliver'd the matter well, when I find the ass in com-  
pound 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 60  
that tell you you have good faces ; if you see this in  
the map of my microcosm, follows it that I am known  
well enough too ? what harm can your bisson con- †  
spectuities glean out of this character, if I be known  
well enough too ?

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

*Men.* You know neither me, yourselves, nor any thing :  
you are ambitious, for poor knaves' caps and legs :  
you wear out a good wholesome forenoon, in  
hearing a cause between an orange-wife and a fosset- 70  
seller, and then rejourne the controversy of three-  
pence to a second day of audience. When you are  
hearing a matter between party and party, if you  
chance to be pinch'd 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. 80

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

*Men.* 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 entomb'd in an ass's pack-saddle; yet you must be saying, Martius is proud: who, in a cheap estimation, is worth all your predecessors, since Deucalion, though peradventure some of the best of 'em were hereditary hangmen. 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. 90

*Brutus and Sicinius go aside*

*Enter Volumnia, Virgilia, and Valeria*

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

*Vol.* Honourable Menenius, my boy Martius approaches; for the love of Juno, let's go. 100

*Men.* Ha! Martius coming home?

CORIOLANUS

*Vol.* Ay, worthy Menenius, and with most prosperous approbation.

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

*Vir.* }  
*Val.* } Nay, 'tis true.

*Vol.* Look, here's a letter from him, the state hath another, his wife another, and (I think) there's one at home for you. 110

*Men.* I will make my very house reel to-night: a letter for me?

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

*Men.* 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.

*Vir.* O, no, no, no. 120

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

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

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

*Men.* Has he disciplin'd Aufidius soundly?

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

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

*Vol.* 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.

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

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

*Vir.* The gods grant them true! 140

*Vol.* True? pow, wow.

*Men.* True? I'll be sworn they are true: where is he wounded? (*to the Tribunes*) God save your good worships! Martius is coming home: he has more cause to be proud. Where is he wounded?

*Vol.* 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 receiv'd in the repulse of Tarquin seven hurts i' the body.

*Men.* One i' the neck, and two i' the thigh, there's nine that I know. † 151

## CORIOLANUS

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

*Men.* Now it's twenty seven; every gash was an enemy's grave. (*A shout and flourish.*) Hark! the trumpets.

*Vol.* These are the ushers of Martius: before him, he carries noise; and behind him, he leaves tears: Death, that dark spirit, in 's nery 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*

*Her.* Know Rome, that all alone Martius did fight  
Within Corioles gates: where he hath won,  
With fame, a name to Martius Caius; these  
In honour follows *Coriolanus*.

Welcome to Rome, renowned Coriolanus!

*Flourish*

*All.* Welcome to Rome, renowned Coriolanus!

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

*Com.* Look, sir, your mother!

*Cor.* O,

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

*Vol.* Nay, my good soldier, up:

*Kneels*

My gentle Martius, worthy Caius, and 170  
 By deed-achieving honour newly nam'd,—  
 What is it (Coriolanus ?) must I call thee ?—  
 But, O, thy wife !

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

*Men.* Now the gods crown thee !  
*Cor.* And live you yet ? (*to Valeria*) O my sweet lady,  
 pardon.

*Vol.* I know not where to turn : O, welcome home :  
 And welcome, general : and ye're welcome all. 180

*Men.* 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.

*Com.* Ever right.

CORIOLANUS

*Cor.* Menenius, ever, ever.

190

*Her.* Give way there, and go on.

*Cor. (to Volumnia and Virgilia)* Your hand, and yours.  
Ere in our own house I do shade my head,  
The good patricians must be visited,  
From whom I have receiv'd not only greetings,  
But with them, change of honours.

*Vol.* I have liv'd

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.

*Cor.* Know, good mother, 200  
I had rather be their servant in my way,  
Than sway with them in theirs.

*Com.* On, to the Capitol !

*Fourish. Cornets. Exeunt in state, as before.*

*Brutus and Sicinius come forward*

*Bru.* 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,  
Clambering the walls to eye him : stalls, bulks,  
windows,

Are smother'd up, leads fill'd, and ridges hors'd  
 With variable complexions ; all agreeing 210  
 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 Phœbus' 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.

*Sic.* On the sudden,  
 I warrant him consul.

*Bru.* Then our office may, 220  
 During his power, go sleep.

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

*Bru.* In that there's comfort.

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



CORIOLANUS

*Bru.* 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. 230

*Sic.* 'Tis right.

*Bru.* 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.

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

*Bru.* 'Tis most like he will.

*Sic.* It shall be to him then, as our good wills ;  
A sure destruction. 240

*Bru.* 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 the war, who have their provand



SCENE II

*The Capitol*

*Enter two Officers, to lay cushions*

*First Off.* Come, come, they are almost here : how many stand for consulships ?

*Sec. Off.* Three, they say : but 'tis thought of every one, Coriolanus will carry it.

*First Off.* That's a brave fellow : but he's vengeance proud, and loves not the common people.

*Sec. Off.* Faith, there have been many great men that have flatter'd the people, who ne'er lov'd them ; and there be many that they have lov'd, 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. 10

*First Off.* If he did not care whether he had their love, or no, he wav'd 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 20

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.

*Sec. Off.* He hath deserv'd worthily of his country, and his ascent is not by such easy degrees as those, who having been supple and courteous to the people, bonneted, without any further deed, to have them at all into their estimation and report : but he hath so planted his honours in their eyes, and his actions 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. 30

*First Off.* No more of him, he's 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 their places by themselves. Coriolanus stands*

*Men.* Having determin'd 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 40  
Hath thus stood for his country. Therefore, please you,

## CORIOLANUS

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 Martius Caius Coriolanus ; whom  
We met here, both to thank, and to remember,  
With honours like himself.

*First Sen.* Speak, good Cominius :  
Leave nothing out for length, and make us think  
Rather our state's defective for requital, 50  
Than we to stretch it out. (*to the Tribunes*) Masters  
o' the people,  
We do request your kindest ears ; and after,  
Your loving motion toward the common body,  
To yield what passes here.

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

*Bru.* 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.

*Men.* That's off, that's off ; 60  
I would you rather had been silent : please you

To hear Cominius speak ?

*Bru.* Most willingly :

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

*Men.* He loves your people,

But tie him not to be their bedfellow :

Worthy Cominius, speak. (*Coriolanus offers to go  
away.*) Nay, keep your place.

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

*Cor.* Your honours' pardon :

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

*Bru.* Sir, I hope 70

My words disbench'd you not.

*Cor.* 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.

*Men.* Pray now, sit down.

*Cor.* 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*

*Men.* Masters of the people,  
Your multiplying spawn how can he flatter—

CORIOLANUS

That's thousand to one good one—when you now see  
He had rather venture all his limbs for honour 80  
Than one on's ears to hear it? Proceed, Cominius.

*Com.* 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, 90  
When with his Amazonian chin he drove  
The bristled lips before him : he bestrid  
An o'er-press'd Roman, and i' the consul's view  
Slew three opposers : Tarquin's self he met,  
And struck him on his knee : in that day's feats,  
When he might act the woman in the scene,  
He prov'd 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, 100  
He lurch'd all swords of the garland : for this last,  
Before and in Corioles, 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 tim'd with dying cries : alone he enter'd 110  
 The mortal gate of the city, which he painted  
 With shunless destiny : aidless came off,  
 And with a sudden re-enforcement struck  
 Corioles like a planet : now all 's his,  
 When by and by the din of war 'gan pierce  
 His ready sense : then straight his doubled spirit  
 Re-quicken'd 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 120  
 Both field and city ours, he never stood  
 To ease his breast with panting.

*Men.* Worthy man !

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

*Com.* Our spoils he kick'd at,  
 And look'd upon things precious, as they were  
 The common muck of the world : he covets less



## CORIOLANUS

Than misery itself would give, rewards  
His deeds with doing them, and is content  
To spend the time to end it.

*Men.* He 's right noble :

Let him be call'd for.

*First Sen.* Call Coriolanus. 130

*Off.* He doth appear.

*Re-enter Coriolanus*

*Men.* The senate, Coriolanus, are well pleas'd  
To make thee consul.

*Cor.* I do owe them still  
My life, and services.

*Men.* It then remains  
That you do speak to the people.

*Cor.* 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.

*Sic.* Sir, the people  
Must have their voices, neither will they bate 140  
One jot of ceremony.

*Men.* 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.

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

*Bru.* Mark you that ?

*Cor.* 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 !

*Men.* Do not stand upon 't : 150  
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 of cornets. Exeunt all but Sicinius and Brutus*

*Bru.* You see how he intends to use the people.

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

*Bru.* Come, we 'll inform them  
Of our proceedings here on the market-place,  
I know they do attend us. *Exeunt* 160

# CORIOLANUS

## SCENE III

### *The Forum*

*Enter seven or eight Citizens*

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

*Sec. Cit.* We may, sir, if we will.

*Third Cit.* 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. 10

*First Cit.* 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 Cit.* We have been call'd so of many, not that our heads are some brown, some black, some abram, some bald; but that our wits are so diversely 20

colour'd: 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.

*Sec. Cit.* Think you so? Which way do you judge my wit would fly?

*Third Cit.* Nay, your wit will not so soon out as another man's will, 'tis strongly wedg'd up in a blockhead: but if it were at liberty, 'twould sure southward.

*Sec. Cit.* Why that way?

30

*Third Cit.* 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.

*Sec. Cit.* You are never without your tricks, you may, you may.

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

*Enter Coriolanus in a gown of humility, with*

*Menenius*

Here he comes, and in the gown of humility; mark his behaviour. We are not to stay all together, but to come by him where he stands, by ones, by twos, and by threes. He's to make his requests by par-

40

CORIOLANUS

ticalars, 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 Citizens*

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

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

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

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

*Men.* You'll mar all,  
I'll leave you: pray you speak to 'em, I pray you 60  
In wholesome manner. *Exit*

*Cor.* Bid them wash their faces,  
And keep their teeth clean. *(Re-enter two of the*  
*Citizens.)* So, here comes a brace.

*Re-enter a third Citizen*

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

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

*Cor.* Mine own desert.

*Sec. Cit.* Your own desert!

*Cor.* Ay, not mine own desire.

*Third Cit.* How not your own desire?

*Cor.* No, sir, 'twas never my desire yet to trouble the poor with begging. 70

*Third Cit.* You must think, if we give you any thing, we hope to gain by you.

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

*First Cit.* The price is, to ask it kindly.

*Cor.* 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?

*Sec. Cit.* You shall ha't, worthy sir.

*Cor.* A match, sir; there's in all two worthy voices 80  
begg'd: I have your alms, adieu.

*Third Cit.* But this is something odd.

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

*Exeunt the three Citizens*

*Re-enter two other Citizens*

*Cor.* Pray you now, if it may stand with the tune of your

## CORIOLANUS

voices that I may be consul, I have here the customary gown.

*Fourth Cit.* You have deserv'd nobly of your country, and you have not deserv'd nobly.

*Cor.* Your enigma ?

*Fourth Cit.* You have been a scourge to her enemies, you have been a rod to her friends, you have not indeed lov'd the common people. 90

*Cor.* You should account me the more virtuous, that I have not been common in my love ; I will, sir, flatter my sworn brother the people to earn a dearer estimation of them, 'tis a condition they account gentle : and since the wisdom of their choice is rather to have my hat, than my heart, I will practise the insinuating nod, and be off to them most counterfeitedly, that is, sir, I will counterfeit the bewitchment 100 of some popular man, and give it bountiful to the desirers : therefore beseech you, I may be consul.

*Fifth Cit.* We hope to find you our friend : and therefore give you our voices heartily.

*Fourth Cit.* You have receiv'd many wounds for your country.

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

*Both Cit.* The gods give you joy, sir, heartily ! *Exeunt* 110

*Cor.* Most sweet voices :

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

*Re-enter three Citizens more*

Here come moe voices.

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. 130

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



CORIOLANUS

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

*All.* Amen, amen. God save thee, noble consul !

*Exeunt*

*Cor.* Worthy voices !

*Re-enter Menenius, with Brutus and Sicinius*

*Men.* 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.

*Cor.* Is this done ?

140

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

*Cor.* Where ? at the senate-house ?

*Sic.* There, Coriolanus.

*Cor.* May I change these garments ?

*Sic.* You may, sir.

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

*Men.* I'll keep you company. Will you along ?

*Bru.* We stay here for the people.

*Sic.* Fare you well.

*Exeunt Coriolanus and Menenius*

He has it now : and, by his looks, methinks

150

'Tis warm at 's heart.

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

*Re-enter Citizens*

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

*First Cit.* He has our voices, sir.

*Bru.* We pray the gods, he may deserve your loves.

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

*Third Cit.* Certainly,  
He flouted us downright.

*First Cit.* No, 'tis his kind of speech, he did not mock  
us.

*Sec. Cit.* Not one amongst us, save yourself, but says 160  
He us'd us scornfully : he should have show'd us  
His marks of merit, wounds received for 's country.

*Sic.* Why so he did, I am sure.

*Citizens.* No, no ; no man saw 'em.

*Third Cit.* 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, 170

## CORIOLANUS

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

I have no further with you.' Was not this mockery ?

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

*Bru.* 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 180  
A place of potency, and sway o' the state,  
If he should still malignantly remain  
Fast foe to the plebcii, 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.

*Sic.* Thus to have said,  
As you were fore-advis'd, had touch'd his spirit, 190  
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 unelectd.

*Bru.* Did you perceive,  
 He did solicit you in free contempt,  
 When he did need your loves : and do you think **200**  
 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 judgement ?

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

*Third Cit.* He 's not confirm'd, we may deny him yet.

*Sec. Cit.* And will deny him :

I'll have five hundred voices of that sound. **210**

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

*Bru.* Get you hence instantly, and tell those friends,  
 They have chose a consul, that will from them take

## CORIOLANUS

Their liberties, make them of no more voice  
Than dogs, that are as often beat for barking,  
As therefore kept to do so.

*Sic.* Let them assemble :

And, on a safer judgement, 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, 220  
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.

*Bru.* Lay

A fault on us, your tribunes, that we labour'd,  
(No impediment between) but that you must  
Cast your election on him.

*Sic.* Say you chose him

More after our commandment, than as guided  
By your own true affections, and that your minds, 230  
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.

*Bru.* Ay, spare us not : say, we read lectures to you,  
How youngly he began to serve his country,



CORIOLANUS

With their refusal, both observe and answer  
The vantage of his anger.

*Sic.* To the Capitol, come :  
We will be there before the stream o' the people :  
And this shall seem, as partly 'tis, their own, 260  
Which we have goaded onward. *Exeunt*

Act Third

SCENE I

*Rome. A street*

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

*Cor.* Tullus Aufidius then had made new head ?

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

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

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

*Cor.* Saw you Aufidius ?

*Lar.* On safe-guard he came to me, and did curse  
Against the Volsces, for they had so vilely 10  
Yielded the town : he is retir'd to Antium.

*Cor.* Spoke he of me ?

*Lar.* He did, my lord.

*Cor.* How ? what ?

*Lar.* 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.

*Cor.* At Antium lives he ?

*Lar.* At Antium.

*Cor.* I wish I had a cause to seek him there,  
To oppose his hatred fully. Welcome home. 20

*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.

*Sic.* Pass no further.

*Cor.* Ha ! what is that ?

*Bru.* It will be dangerous to go on : no further.



CORIOLANUS

*Cor.* What makes this change ?

*Men.* The matter ?

*Com.* Hath he not pass'd the noble, and the common ?

*Bru.* Cominius, no.

*Cor.* Have I had children's voices ? 30

*First Sen.* Tribunes, give way, he shall to the market-  
place.

*Bru.* The people are incens'd against him.

*Sic.* Stop,

Or all will fall in broil.

*Cor.* 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 ?

*Men.* Be calm, be calm.

*Cor.* 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, 40  
Nor ever will be rul'd.

*Bru.* 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.

*Cor.* Why, this was known before.

*Bru.* Not to them all.

*Cor.* Have you inform'd them sithence ?

*Bru.* How ? I inform them ?

*Com.* You are like to do such business.

*Bru.* Not unlike,

Each way, to better yours.

*Cor.* Why then should I be consul ? By yond clouds, 50  
Let me deserve so ill as you, and make me  
Your fellow tribune.

*Sic.* 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.

*Men.* Let 's be calm.

*Com.* The people are abus'd : set on, this paltering  
Becomes not Rome : nor has Coriolanus  
Deserv'd this so dishonour'd rub, laid falsely 60  
I' the plain way of his merit.

*Cor.* Tell me of corn :  
This was my speech, and I will speak 't again—

## CORIOLANUS

*Men.* Not now, not now.

*First Sen.* Not in this heat, sir, now.

*Cor.* Now, as I live, I will. My nobler friends,  
I crave their pardons :  
For the mutable, rank-scented meinie, 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, 70  
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.

*Men.* Well, no more.

*First Sen.* No more words, we beseech you.

*Cor.* 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.

*Bru.* You speak o' the people, 80

As if you were a god, to punish ; not  
A man, of their infirmity.

- Sic.* 'Twere well  
We let the people know 't.
- Men.* What, what? his choler—
- Cor.* Choler?  
Were I as patient as the midnight sleep,  
By Jove, 'twould be my mind.
- Sic.* It is a mind  
That shall remain a poison where it is;  
Not poison any further.
- Cor.* ' Shall ' remain?  
Hear you this Triton of the minnows? mark you  
His absolute ' shall '?
- Com.* 'Twas from the canon.
- Cor.* ' Shall ' ! 90  
O good, but most unwise patricians: why,  
You grave, but reckless, senators, have you thus  
Given Hydra here to choose an officer,  
That with his peremptory ' shall,' being but  
The horn and noise o' the monster's, wants not spirit  
To say, he'll turn your current in a ditch,  
And make your channel his? If he have power,  
Then veil your ignorance: if none, awake  
Your dangerous lenity. If you are learn'd,  
Be not as common fools; if you are not, 100  
Let them have cushions by you. You are plebeians,

## CORIOLANUS

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.

110

*Com.* Well, on to the market-place.

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

*Men.* Well, well, no more of that.

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

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

*Cor.* 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,

121

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 native  
 Of our so frank donation. Well, what then ? 130  
 How shall this bosom multiplied 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.

*Men.* Come, enough.

*Bru.* Enough, with over measure.

*Cor.* No, take more : 140

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

## CORIOLANUS

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, 150  
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 judgement, and bereaves the state  
Of that integrity which should become 't :  
Not having the power to do the good it would 160  
For the ill which doth control 't.

*Bru.* Has said enough.

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

*Cor.* 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. 170

*Bru.* Manifest treason !

*Sic.* This a consul ? no.

*Bru.* The ædiles, ho !

*Enter an Ædile*

Let him be apprehended

*Sic.* Go call the people, (*exit Ædile*) 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.

*Cor.* Hence, old goat !

*Senators, &c.* We'll surety him.

*Com.* Aged sir, hands off.

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

*Sic.* Help, ye citizens !

*Enter a rabble of Citizens, with the Ædiles*

*Men.* On both sides more respect. 180

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

*Bru.* Seize him, ædiles !

*Citizens.* Down with him ! down with him !

*Senators, &c.* Weapons, weapons, weapons !

*They all bustle about Coriolanus, crying*  
 ' Tribunes ! ' ' Patricians ! ' ' Citizens ! ' ' What, ho ! '



## CORIOLANUS

Sicinius ! ' Brutus ! ' ' Coriolanus ! ' ' Citizens ! '  
' Peace, peace, peace ! ' ' Stay ! hold ! peace ! '

*Men.* What is about to be ? I am out of breath,  
Confusion 's near, I cannot speak. You, tribunes  
To the people : Coriolanus, patience : 190  
Speak, good Sicinius.

*Sic.* Hear me, people ; peace !

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

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

*Men.* Fie, fie, fie,

This is the way to kindle, not to quench.

*First Sen.* To unbuild the city, and to lay all flat.

*Sic.* What is the city, but the people ?

*Citizens.* True,

The people are the city.

*Bru.* By the consent of all, we were establish'd 200

The people's magistrates.

*Citizens.* You so remain.

*Men.* And so are like to do.

*Com.* 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.

*Sic.* This deserves death.

*Bru.* Or let us stand to our authority,  
Or let us lose it : we do here pronounce,  
Upon the part o' the people, in whose power  
We were elected theirs, Martius is worthy 210  
Of present death.

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

*Bru.* Ædiles, seize him !

*Citizens.* Yield, Martius, yield !

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

*Ædiles.* Peace, peace !

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

*Bru.* Sir, those cold ways,  
That seem like prudent helps, are very poisonous, 220  
Where the disease is violent. Lay hands upon him,  
And bear him to the rock.

*Cor.* No, I'll die here : (*Drawing his sword*)  
There 's some among you have beheld me fighting,  
Come, try upon yourselves what you have seen me.

CORIOLANUS

*Men.* Down with that sword ! Tribunes, withdraw awhile.

*Bru.* Lay hands upon him.

*Men.* Help Martius, help :

You that be noble, help him, young and old !

*Citizens.* Down with him, down with him !

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

*Men.* Go, get you to our house : be gone, away,

All will be naught else.

*Sec. Sen.* Get you gone.

*Com.* Stand fast, 230

We have as many friends as enemies.

*Men.* Shall it be put to that ?

*First Sen.* The gods forbid !

I prithee, noble friend, home to thy house ;

Leave us to cure this cause.

*Men.* For 'tis a sore upon us,

You cannot tent yourself : be gone, beseech you.

*Com.* Come, sir, along with us.

*Cor.* 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,—

*Men.* Be gone,

Put not your worthy rage into your tongue, 240

One time will owe another.

*Cor.* On fair ground  
I could beat forty of them.

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

*Com.* 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 us'd to bear.

*Men.* Pray you, be gone :  
I'll try whether my old wit be in request 250  
With those that have but little : this must be patch'd  
With cloth of any colour.

*Com.* Nay, come away.

*Exeunt Coriolanus, Cominius, and others*

*First Patrician.* This man has marr'd his fortune.

*Men.* 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

CORIOLANUS

He heard the name of death. *A noise within*  
Here's goodly work!

*Sec. Pat.* I would they were a-bed! 260

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

*Re-enter Brutus and Sicinius, with the rabble*

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

*Men.* You worthy tribunes—

*Sic.* 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 Cit.* He shall well know  
The noble tribunes are the people's mouths, 370  
And we their hands.

*Citizens.* He shall, sure on't.

*Men.* Sir, sir,—

*Sic.* Peace!

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

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

*Men.* Hear me speak :

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

*Sic.* Consul ? what consul ?

*Men.* The consul Coriolanus.

*Bru.* He consul !

*Citizens.* No, no, no, no, no. 280

*Men.* 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.

*Sic.* 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.

*Men.* Now the good gods forbid  
That our renowned Rome, whose gratitude  
Towards her deserved children is enroll'd 290  
In Jove's own book, like an unnatural dam  
Should now eat up her own !

*Sic.* He 's a disease that must be cut away.

*Men.* O, he 's a limb that has but a disease ;  
Mortal, to cut it off ; to cure it, easy.

## CORIOLANUS

What has he done to Rome, that 's worthy death ?  
Killing our enemies, the blood he hath lost  
(Which, I dare vouch, is more than that he hath  
By many an ounce) he dropp'd it for his country : 300  
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.

*Sic.* This is clean kam.

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

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

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

*Men.* One word more, one word : 310  
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.

*Bru.* If it were so—

*Sic.* What do ye talk ?

Have we not had a taste of his obedience ?  
Our ædiles smote : ourselves resisted : come.

*Men.* Consider this : he has been bred i' the wars  
Since he could draw a sword, and is ill school'd 320  
In bolted language : meal and bran together  
He throws without distinction. Give me leave,  
I'll go to him, and undertake to bring him in  
peace,

Where he shall answer by a lawful form  
(In peace) to his utmost peril.

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

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

*Bru.* Go not home. 330

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

*Men.* I'll bring him to you.  
(to the Senators) Let me desire your company : he must  
come,



CORIOLANUS

Or what is worst will follow.

*First Sen.*

Pray you, let's to him.

*Exeunt*

SCENE II

*A room in Coriolanus's house*

*Enter Coriolanus with Patricians*

*Cor.* 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.

*A Patrician.* You do the nobler.

*Cor.* 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 10  
In congregations, to yawn, be still, and wonder,  
When one but of my ordinance stood up  
To speak of peace, or war.

*Enter Volumnia*

I talk of you ;

Why did you wish me milder ? would you have me  
False to my nature ? Rather say, I play

The man I am.

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

*Cor.* Let go.

*Vol.* You might have been enough the man you are,  
With striving less to be so : lesser had been 20  
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.

*Cor.* Let them hang.

*Vol.* Ay, and burn too.

*Enter Menenius with the Senators*

*Men.* Come, come, you have been too rough, something  
too rough :

You must return, and mend it.

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

*Vel.* Pray, be counsell'd ;  
I have a heart as little apt as yours,  
But yet a brain, that leads my use of anger 30  
To better vantage.

*Men.* Well said, noble woman, †  
Before he should thus stoop to the herd, but that †

CORIOLANUS

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.

*Cor.* What must I do ?

*Men.* Return to the tribunes.

*Cor.* Well, what then ? what then ?

*Men.* Repent what you have spoke.

*Cor.* For them ? I cannot do it to the gods,  
Must I then do 't to them ?

*Vol.* You are too absolute,  
Though therein you can never be too noble, 40  
But when extremities speak. I have heard you say,  
Honour and policy, like unsever'd friends,  
I' the war do grow together : grant that, and tell me,  
In peace, what each of them by the other lose,  
That they combine not there.

*Cor.* Tush, tush !

*Men.* A good demand.

*Vol.* 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 50  
It stands in like request ?

*Cor.* Why force you this ?

*Vol.* 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 roted 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 60  
 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.

*Men.* Noble lady,  
 Come, go with us, speak fair : you may salve so, 70  
 Not what is dangerous present, but the loss  
 Of what is past.

*Vol.* I prithee now, my son,  
 Go to them, with this bonnet in thy hand,  
 And thus far having stretch'd it (here be with them)

## CORIOLANUS

Thy knee bussing the stones—for in such business  
Action is eloquence, and the eyes of the ignorant  
More learned than the ears—waving thy head,  
Which often thus correcting thy stout heart,  
Now humble as the ripest mulberry  
That will not hold the handling ; or say to them, 80  
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.

*Men.* 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.

*Vol.* Prithee now,  
Go, and be rul'd : although I know thou hadst rather 90  
Follow thine enemy in a fiery gulf,  
Than flatter him in a bower.

*Enter Cominius*

Here is Cominius.

*Com.* 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.

*Men.* Only fair speech.

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

*Vol.* He must, and will :  
Prithee now, say you will, and go about it.

*Cor.* Must I go show them my unbarb'd sconce ? must I  
With my base tongue give to my noble heart 100  
A lie, that it must bear ? Well, I will do 't :  
Yet were there but this single plot, to lose  
This mould of Martius, they to dust should grind it,  
And throw 't against the wind. To the market-place !  
You have put me now to such a part, which never  
I shall discharge to the life.

*Com.* Come, come, we 'll prompt you.

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

*Cor.* Well, I must do 't : 110  
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 lull asleep : the smiles of knaves  
Tent in my cheeks, and schoolboys' tears take up

## CORIOLANUS

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, 120  
Lest I surcease to honour mine own truth,  
And by my body's action teach my mind  
A most inherent baseness.

*Vol.* 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.

*Cor.* Pray, be content : 130  
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 below'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.

*Vol.* Do your will. *Exit*  
*Com.* Away ! the tribunes do attend you : arm yourself

To answer mildly : for they are prepar'd  
 With accusations, as I hear, more strong 140  
 Than are upon you yet.

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

*Men.* Ay, but mildly.

*Cor.* Well, mildly be it then, mildly ! *Exeunt*

## SCENE III

*The Forum**Enter Sicinius and Brutus*

*Bru.* 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 Ædile*

What, will he come ?

*Æd.* He's coming.

*Bru.* How accompanied ?

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



CORIOLANUS

- Sic.* Have you a catalogue  
Of all the voices that we have procur'd,  
Set down by the poll ?
- Æd.* I have ; 'tis ready. 10
- Sic.* Have you collected them by tribes ?
- Æd.* I have.
- Sic.* 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.
- Æd.* I shall inform them.
- Bru.* And when such time they have begun to cry,  
Let them not cease, but with a din confus'd 20  
Enforce the present execution  
Of what we chance to sentence.
- Æd.* Very well.
- Sic.* Make them be strong, and ready for this hint,  
When we shall hap to give 't them. *Exit Ædile*
- Bru.* Go about it,  
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.

*Sic.* Well, here he comes. 30

*Enter Coriolanus, Menenius, and Cominius, with Senators  
 and Patricians*

*Men.* Calmly, I do beseech you.

*Cor.* Ay, as an ostler, that for the poorest piece  
 Will bear the knave by the volume: the honour'd  
 gods

Keep Rome in safety, and the chairs of justice  
 Supplied with worthy men, plant love among's,  
 Throng our large temples with the shows of peace,  
 And not our streets with war!

*First Sen.* Amen, amen.

*Men.* A noble wish.

*Re-enter Ædile, with Citizens*

*Sic.* Draw near, ye people.

*Æd.* List to your tribunes; audience: peace, I say! 40

*Cor.* First, hear me speak.

*Both Tri.* Well, say. Peace, ho!

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

*Sic.* I do demand,  
 If you submit you to the people's voices,

CORIOLANUS

Allow their officers, and are content  
To suffer lawful censure for such faults  
As shall be prov'd upon you.

*Cor.* I am content.

*Men.* Lo, citizens, he says he is content.

The warlike service he has done, consider : think  
Upon the wounds his body bears, which show 50  
Like graves i' the holy churchyard.

*Cor.* Scratches with brics,  
Scars to move laughter only.

*Men.* 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.

*Com.* Well, well, no more.

*Cor.* What is the matter

That being pass'd for consul with full voice,  
I am so dishonour'd, that the very hour 60  
You take it off again ?

*Sic.* Answer to us.

*Cor.* Say, then : 'tis true, I ought so.

*Sic.* 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.

*Cor.* How ? traitor ?

*Men.* Nay, temperately : your promise.

*Cor.* The fires i' the lowest hell fold-in the people !  
Call me their traitor, thou injurious tribune !  
Within thine eyes sat twenty thousand deaths, 70  
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.

*Sic.* Mark you this, people ?

*Citizens.* To the rock, to the rock with him !

*Sic.* 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 80  
Those whose great power must try him. Even this,  
So criminal, and in such capital kind,  
Deserves the extremest death.

*Bru.* But since he hath  
Serv'd well for Rome—

*Cor.* What do you prate of service ?

*Bru.* I talk of that, that know it.

CORIOLANUS

*Cor.* You ?

*Men.* Is this the promise that you made your mother ?

*Com.* Know, I pray you,—

*Cor.* 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.'

90

*Sic.* 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, 100  
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 banish'd, and it shall be so.

*Com.* Hear me, my masters, and my common friends,—

*Sic.* He's sentenc'd : no more hearing.

*Com.* Let me speak : 110

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—

*Sic.* We know your drift :—speak what ?

*Bru.* There's no more to be said, but he is banish'd  
 As enemy to the people, and his country.  
 It shall be so. 120

*Citizens.* It shall be so, it shall be so.

*Cor.* 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 130  
 Your ignorance (which finds not till it feels,

## CORIOLANUS

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*

*They all shout, and throw up their caps*

*Æd.* The people's enemy is gone, is gone !

*Citizens.* Our enemy is banish'd, he is gone : Hoo ! hoo !

*Sic.* Go, see him out at gates, and follow him 140  
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 Fourth

## SCENES I, II

Rome. *At a gate of the city*

*Enter Coriolanus, Volumnia, Virgilia, Menenius, Cominius,  
with the young Nobility of Rome*

*Cor.* Come, leave your tears : a brief farewell : the 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 10  
The heart that conn'd them.

*Vir.* O heavens ! O heavens !

*Cor.* Nay, I prithee, woman,—

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

*Cor.* What, what, what ?

I shall be lov'd, when I am lack'd. Nay, mother,



## CORIOLANUS

Resume that spirit, when you were wont to say,  
If you had been the wife of Hercules,  
Six of his labours you 'ld have done, and sav'd  
Your husband so much sweat. Cominius,  
Droop not ; adieu. Farewell my wife, my mother. 20  
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-hardening spectacles. Tell these sad women,  
'Tis fond to wail inevitable strokes,  
As 'tis to laugh at 'em. My mother, you wot well  
My hazards still have been your solace, and  
Believe 't not lightly, though I go alone,  
Like to a lonely dragon, that his fen 30  
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.

*Vol.* 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.

*Cor.* O the gods !  
*Com.* 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 40  
 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.

*Cor.* 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 : 50  
 While I remain above the ground, you shall  
 Hear from me still, and never of me aught  
 But what is like me formerly.

*Men.* 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 'ld with thee every foot.

*Cor.* Give me thy hand :  
 Come. *Exeunt*

CORIOLANUS

*Near the gate*

*Enter the two Tribunes, Sicinius and Brutus,  
with the Ædile*

*Sic.* 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.

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

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

*Bru.* Dismiss them home. *Exit Ædile*  
Here comes his mother.

*Enter Volumnia, Virgilia, and Menenius*

*Sic.* Let's not meet her.

*Bru.* Why ?

*Sic.* They say she's mad.

*Bru.* They have ta'en note of us : keep on your way. 10

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

*Men.* Peace, peace, be not so loud.

*Vol.* If that I could for weeping, you should hear,

Nay, and you shall hear some. (*to Brutus*) Will you be gone ?

*Vir.* (*to Sicinius*) You shall stay too : I would I had the power

To say so to my husband.

*Sic.* Are you mankind ?

*Vol.* 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 ?

*Sic.* O blessed heavens ! 20

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

*Sic.* What then ?

*Vir.* What then ?

He 'ld make an end of thy posterity.

*Vol.* Bastards, and all.

Good man, the wounds that he does bear for Rome !

*Men.* Come, come, peace.

*Sic.* I would he had continued to his country 30  
As he began, and not unknit himself  
The noble knot he made.

CORIOLANUS

*Bru.* I would he had.

*Vol.* '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.

*Bru.* Pray, let us go.

*Vol.* 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, 40  
This lady's husband here ; this (do you see ?)  
Whom you have banish'd, does exceed you all.

*Bru.* Well, well, we 'll leave you.

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

*Vol.* 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 unlog my heart  
Of what lies heavy to 't.

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

*Vol.* Anger 's my meat : I sup upon myself, 50

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 Vol. and Vir.*

*Men.* Fie, fie, fie !

*Exit*

SCENE III

*A highway between Rome and Antium*

*Enter a Roman and a Volsce, meeting*

*Rom.* I know you well, sir, and you know me : your name,  
 I think, is Adrian.

*Vol.* It is so, sir ; truly, I have forgot you.

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

*Vol.* Nicanor ? no.

*Rom.* The same, sir.

*Vol.* You had more beard when I last saw you, but your  
 favour is well appear'd by your tongue. What 's the  
 news in Rome ? I have a note from the Volscian 10  
 state to find you out there. You have well sav'd  
 me a day's journey.

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

*Vol.* Hath been ? is it ended then ? Our state thinks not

## CORIOLANUS

so, they are in a most warlike preparation, and hope to come upon them, in the heat of their division.

*Rom.* 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. 20

*Vol.* Coriolanus banished!

*Rom.* Banished, sir.

*Vol.* You will be welcome with this intelligence, Nicanor.

*Rom.* 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. 30

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

*Rom.* 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? 40

*Vol.* 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.

*Rom.* 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.

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

*Rom.* Well, let us go together. *Exeunt* 50

## SCENE IV

*Antium. Before Aufidius's house*

*Enter Coriolanus in mean apparel, disguised and muffled*

*Cor.* 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.

*Cit.* And you.



CORIOLANUS

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

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

*Cor.* Which is his house, beseech you ? 10

*Cit.* This here before you.

*Cor.* Thank you, sir ; farewell.

*Exit Citizen*

O world, thy slippery turns ! Friends now fast sworn,  
Whose double bosoms seem 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, 20  
Some trick not worth an egg, shall grow dear friends  
And interjoin their issues. So with me :  
My birth-place hate I, and my love's upon  
This enemy town. I'll enter : if he slay me,  
He does fair justice ; if he give me way,  
I'll do his country service. *Exit*

## SCENE V

*The same. A hall in Aufidius's house*

*Music within. Enter a Servingman*

*First Serv.* Wine, wine, wine!—What service is here?  
I think our fellows are asleep. *Exit*

*Enter another Servingman*

*Sec. Serv.* Where's Cotus? my master calls for him.  
Cotus! *Exit*

*Enter Coriolanus*

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

*Re-enter the first Servingman*

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

*Cor.* I have deserv'd no better entertainment, 10  
In being Coriolanus.

*Re-enter second Servingman*

*Sec. Serv.* Whence are you, sir? Has the porter his eyes  
in his head, that he gives entrance to such com-  
panions? Pray, get you out.

*Cor.* Away!

*Sec. Serv.* 'Away?' Get you away.

CORIOLANUS

*Cor.* Now thou 'rt troublesome.

*Sec. Serv.* Are you so brave? I'll have you talk'd with anon.

*Enter a third Servingman. The first meets him*

*Tbird Serv.* What fellow's this? 20

*First Serv.* A strange one as ever I look'd on: I cannot get him out o' the house: prithee, call my master to him. *Retires*

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

*Cor.* Let me but stand, I will not hurt your hearth.

*Tbird Serv.* What are you?

*Cor.* A gentleman.

*Tbird Serv.* A marvellous poor one.

*Cor.* True, so I am. 30

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

*Cor.* Follow your function, go, and batten on cold bits.

*Pushes him away from him*

*Tbird Serv.* What, you will not? Prithee, tell my master what a strange guest he has here.

*Sec. Serv.* And I shall. *Exit*

*Tbird Serv.* Where dwell'st thou?

*Cor.* Under the canopy.

*Third Serv.* Under the canopy ?

40

*Cor.* Ay.

*Third Serv.* Where 's that ?

*Cor.* I' the city of kites and crows.

*Third Serv.* I' the city of kites and crows ? What an ass  
it is ; then thou dwell'st with daws too ?

*Cor.* No, I serve not thy master.

*Third Serv.* How, sir ? do you meddle with my master ?

*Cor.* Ay, 'tis an honest service than to meddle with thy  
mistress :

Thou prat'st, and prat'st, serve with thy trencher ;  
hence !

50

*Beats him away. Exit third Servingman*

*Enter Aufidius with the second Servingman*

*Auf.* Where is this fellow ?

*Sec. Serv.* Here, sir ; I 'ld have beaten him like a dog,  
but for disturbing the lords within. *Retires*

*Auf.* Whence com'st thou ? what wouldst thou ? thy  
name ?

Why speak'st not ? Speak, man : what 's thy name ?

*Cor.* (*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.

*Auf.* What is thy name ?

CORIOLANUS

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

*Auf.* Say, what 's thy name ? 60

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

*Cor.* Prepare thy brow to frown : know'st thou me yet ?

*Auf.* I know thee not : thy name ?

*Cor.* My name is Caius Martius, who hath done  
To thee particularly, and to all the Volsces,  
Great hurt and mischief : thereto witness may  
My surname, Coriolanus. The painful service,  
The extreme dangers, and the drops of blood 70  
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  
Hoop'd out of Rome. Now, this extremity  
Hath brought me to thy hearth, not out of hope 80  
(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 90  
 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  
 Thou 'rt 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, 100  
 And cannot live but to thy shame, unless  
 It be to do thee service.

*Auf.*

O Martius, Martius !

Each word thou hast spoke hath weeded from my heart  
 A root of ancient envy. If Jupiter  
 Should from yond cloud speak divine things,  
 And say ' 'Tis true,' I 'ld not believe them more

## CORIOLANUS

Than thee, all noble Martius. Let me twine  
Mine arms about that body, where against  
My grained ash an hundred times hath broke,  
And scarr'd the moon with splinters : here I clip 110  
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  
Sigh'd 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 120  
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 Martius,  
Had we no quarrel else to Rome, but that  
Thou art thence banish'd, we would muster all  
From twelve to seventy ; and pouring war 130  
Into the bowels of ungrateful Rome,

Like a bold flood o'er-beat. 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.

*Cor.* You bless me, gods!

*Auf.* Therefore, most absolute sir, if thou wilt have  
 The leading of thine own revenges, take  
 The one half of my commission, and set down  
 As best thou art experienc'd, since thou know'st 140  
 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;  
 Yct, Martius, that was much. Your hand: most  
 welcome!

*Exeunt Coriolanus and Aufidius. The two  
 Servingmen come forward*

*First Serv.* Here's a strange alteration!

*Sec. Serv.* By my hand, I had thought to have stricken 150  
 him with a cudgel, and yet my mind gave me, his  
 clothes made a false report of him.



CORIOLANUS

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

*Sec. Serv.* 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 Serv.* He had so; looking as it were— Would I were hang'd, but I thought there was more in him, than I could think. 160

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

*First Serv.* I think he is: but a greater soldier than he, you wot one.

*Sec. Serv.* Who? my master?

*First Serv.* Nay, it's no matter for that.

*Sec. Serv.* Worth six on him.

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

*Sec. Serv.* Faith, look you, one cannot tell how to say 170  
that: for the defence of a town, our general is excellent.

*First Serv.* Ay, and for an assault too.

*Re-enter third Servingman*

*Third Serv.* O slaves, I can tell you news; news, you rascals!

*First and Sec. Serv.* What, what, what? let's partake.

*Third Serv.* I would not be a Roman, of all nations; I had  
as lieve be a condemn'd man.

*First and Sec. Serv.* Wherefore? wherefore?

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

*First Serv.* Why do you say, thwack our general?

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

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

*First Serv.* He was too hard for him directly, to say the  
troth on't, before Corioles, he scotch'd him, and  
notch'd him like a carbonado.

*Sec. Serv.* An he had been cannibally given, he might have  
boiled and eaten him too. 190

*First Serv.* But more of thy news.

*Third Serv.* 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 ask'd 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; 200

## CORIOLANUS

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 poll'd.

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

*Third Serv.* 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, while he's in directitude. 210

*First Serv.* Directitude? what's that?

*Third Serv.* 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 Serv.* But when goes this forward?

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

*Sec. Serv.* Why, then we shall have a stirring world again : 220  
this peace is nothing, but to rust iron, increase tailors, and breed ballad-makers.

*First Serv.* Let me have war, say I, it exceeds peace as far as day does night : it's spritely, walking, audible, and full of vent. Peace is a very apoplexy, lethargy,

mull'd, deaf, sleepy, insensible, a getter of more  
bastard children than war's a destroyer of men.

*Sec. Serv.* 'Tis so, and as wars in some sort may be said to  
be a ravisher, so it cannot be denied but peace is a  
great maker of cuckolds. 230

*First Serv.* Ay, and it makes men hate one another.

*Third Serv.* 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.

*First and Sec. Serv.* In, in, in, in! *Exeunt*

## SCENE VI

*Rome. A public place*

*Enter the two Tribunes, Sicinius and Brutus*

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

CORIOLANUS

About their functions friendly.

*Bru.* We stood to 't in good time.

*Enter Menenius*

Is this Menenius ?

10

*Sic.* 'Tis he, 'tis he : O, he is grown most kind  
Of late. Hail, sir !

*Men.* Hail to you both !

*Sic.* 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.

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

*Sic.* Where is he, hear you ?

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

*Enter three or four Citizens*

*Citizens.* The gods preserve you both !

*Sic.* God-den, our neighbours. 20

*Bru.* God-den to you all, god-den to you all.

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

*Sic.* Live, and thrive !

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

*Citizens.* Now the gods keep you !

*Both Tri.* Farewell, farewell.

*Exeunt Citizens*

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

*Bru.* Caius Martius was  
A worthy officer i' the war, but insolent, 30  
O'ercome with pride, ambitious, past all thinking  
Self-loving,—

*Sic.* And affecting one sole throne,  
Without assistance.

*Men.* I think not so.

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

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

*Enter an Ædile*

*Æd.* Worthy tribunes,  
There is a slave whom we have put in prison,  
Reports the Volsces with two several powers  
Are enter'd in the Roman territories, 40  
And with the deepest malice of the war  
Destroy what lies before 'em.

*Men.* 'Tis Aufidius,  
Who, hearing of our Martius' banishment,  
Thrusts forth his horns again into the world

CORIOLANUS

Which were inshell'd, when Martius stood for Rome,  
And durst not once peep out.

*Sic.* Come, what talk you  
Of Martius ?

*Bru.* Go see this rumourer whipp'd, it cannot be  
The Volsces dare break with us.

*Men.* Cannot be ?

We have record that very well it can,  
And three examples of the like hath been 50  
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.

*Sic.* Tell not me :  
I know this cannot be.

*Bru.* Not possible.

*Enter a Messenger*

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

*Sic.* 'Tis this slave :  
Go whip him 'fore the people's eyes : his raising, 60  
Nothing but his report.

*Mes.* Yes, worthy sir,

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

*Sic.* What more fearful ?

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

*Sic.* This is most likely !

*Bru.* Rais'd only, that the weaker sort may wish  
Good Martius home again.

*Sic.* The very trick on 't. 70

*Men.* This is unlikely ;  
He and Aufidius can no more atone  
Than violent'st contrariety.

*Enter a second Messenger*

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

*Enter Cominius*

*Com.* O, you have made good work.

*Men.* What news ? what news ? 80



CORIOLANUS

*Com.* 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,—

*Men.* What 's the news ? what 's the news ?

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

*Men.* Pray now, your news ?—  
You have made fair work, I fear me.—Pray, your news,  
If Martius should be join'd with Volscians,—

*Com.* If ?  
He is their god, he leads them like a thing 90  
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.

*Men.* 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 !

*Com.* He 'll shake your Rome about your ears.

*Men.* As Hercules †  
Did shake down mellow fruit : you have made fair  
work ! 100

*Bru.* But is this true, sir ?

*Com.* 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.

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

*Com.* Who shall ask it ?  
 The tribunes cannot do 't for shame ; the people  
 Deserve such pity of him, as the wolf 110  
 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.

*Men.* '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 !

*Com.* You have brought  
 A trembling upon Rome, such as was never

CORIOLANUS

So incapable of help.

*Both Tri.* Say not, we brought it. 120

*Men.* How? was 't we? we lov'd him, but like beasts,  
And cowardly nobles, gave way unto your clusters,  
Who did hoot him out o' the city.

*Com.* 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*

*Men.* Here come the clusters.

And is Aufidius with him? You are they  
That made the air unwholesome, when you cast 130  
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 Cit.* For mine own part,

When I said banish him, I said 'twas pity. 140

*Sec. Cit.* And so did I.

*Third Cit.* 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.

*Com.* Ye 're goodly things, you voices !

*Men.* You have made

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

*Com.* O, ay, what else ? *Exeunt Cominius and Menenius*

*Sic.* Go, masters, get you home, be not dismay'd, These are a side that would be glad to have 150 This true, which they so seem to fear. Go home, And show no sign of fear.

*First Cit.* The gods be good to us ! Come, masters, let 's home, I ever said we were i' the wrong, when we banish'd him.

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

*Exeunt Citizens*

*Bru.* I do not like this news.

*Sic.* Nor I.

*Bru.* Let 's to the Capitol : would half my wealth Would buy this for a lie ! 160

*Sic.* Pray, let us go. *Exeunt*

CORIOLANUS

SCENE VII

*A camp, at a small distance from Rome*

*Enter Aufidius with his Lieutenant*

*Auf.* Do they still fly to the Roman ?

*Lie.* 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.

*Auf.* I cannot help it now,  
Unless by using means I lame the foot  
Of our design. He bears himself more proudlicr,  
Even to my person, than I thought he would  
When first I did embrace him. Yet his nature 10  
In that 's no changeling, and I must excuse  
What cannot be amended.

*Lie.* Yet I wish, sir  
(I mean for your particular) you had not  
Join'd in commission with him : but either  
Have borne the action of yourself, or else  
To him had left it solely.

*Auf.* 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 20  
 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.

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

*Auf.* All places yield to him ere he sits down,

And the nobility of Rome are his :  
 The senators and patricians love him too : 30  
 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 judgement,  
 To fail in the disposing of those chances 40  
 Which he was lord of : or whether nature,  
 Not to be other than one thing, not moving

## CORIOLANUS

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, 50  
And power, unto itself most commendable,  
Hath not a tomb so evident as a chair  
To extol what it hath done.

One fire drives out one fire ; one nail, one nail ;  
Rights by rights fouler, 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 Fifth

## SCENE I

*Rome. A public place*

*Enter Menenius, Cominius, Sicinius and Brutus, the two  
Tribunes, with others*

*Men.* 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.

*Com.* He would not seem to know me.

*Men.* Do you hear ?

*Com.* Yet one time he did call me by my name :  
I urg'd our old acquaintance, and the drops 10  
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 o' the fire  
Of burning Rome.

*Men.* Why, so : you have made good work :



CORIOLANUS

A pair of tribunes, that have rack'd for Rome,  
To make coals cheap ; a noble memory !

*Com.* 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.

20

*Men.* Very well,  
Could he say less ?

*Com.* 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.

*Men.* 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.

30

*Sic.* 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.

*Men.* No : I'll not meddle.

*Sic.* Pray you, go to him.

*Men.* What should I do ?

*Bru.* Only make trial what your love can do, 40  
For Rome, towards Martius.

*Men.* Well, and say that Martius  
Return me, as Cominius is return'd,  
Unheard : what then ?  
But as a discontented friend, grief-shot  
With his unkindness ? say 't be so ?

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

*Men.* 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, 50  
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.

CORIOLANUS

*Bru.* You know the very road into his kindness,  
And cannot lose your way.

*Men.* Good faith, I'll prove him, 60  
Speed how it will. I shall ere long have knowledge  
Of my success. *Exit*

*Com.* He'll never hear him.

*Sic.* Not?

*Com.* I tell you, he does sit in gold, his eye  
Red as 'twould burn Rome : and his injury  
The gaoler to his pity. I kneel'd before him,  
'Twas very faintly he said ' Rise ; ' dismiss'd me  
Thus with his speechless hand. What he would do  
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, 70  
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*

## SCENES II, III

*The Volscian camp before Rome**Two Sentinels on guard**Enter to them, Menenius**First Sent.* Stay : whence are you ?*Sec. Sent.* Stand, and go back.*Men.* You guard like men, 'tis well. But, by your leave,  
I am an officer of state, and come  
To speak with Coriolanus.*First Sent.* From whence ?*Men.* From Rome.*First Sent.* You may not pass, you must return : our general  
Will no more hear from thence.*Sec. Sent.* You 'll see your Rome embrac'd with fire, before  
You 'll speak with Coriolanus.*Men.* 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 Sent.* Be it so, go back ; the virtue of your name  
Is not here passable.

## CORIOLANUS

*Men.* 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, 20  
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 Sent.* Faith, sir, if you had told as many lies in his  
behalf as you have utter'd words in your own, you  
should not pass here : no, though it were as virtuous  
to lie as to live chastely. Therefore go back.

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

*Sec. Sent.* Howsoever you have been his liar, as you say 30  
you have, I am one that, telling true under him, must  
say you cannot pass. Therefore go back.

*Men.* Has he din'd, canst thou tell? for I would not  
speak with him, till after dinner.

*First Sent.* You are a Roman, are you?

*Men.* I am as thy general is.

*First Sent.* Then you should hate Rome, as he does.

Can you, when you have push'd out your gates the  
 very defender of them, and, in a violent popular  
 ignorance, given your enemy your shield, think to 40  
 front his revenges with the easy groans of old  
 women, the virginal palms of your daughters, or  
 with the palsied intercession of such a decay'd 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 deceiv'd,  
 therefore back to Rome, and prepare for your execu-  
 tion: you are condemn'd, our general has sworn  
 you out of reprieve and pardon.

*Men.* Sirrah, if thy captain knew I were here, he would 50  
 use me with estimation.

*First Sent.* Come, my captain knows you not.

*Men.* I mean thy general.

*First Sent.* 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.

*Men.* Nay, but, fellow, fellow,—

*Enter Coriolanus and Aufidius*

*Cor.* What's the matter?

*Men.* Now, you companion: I'll say an errand for you:  
 you shall know now that I am in estimation: you 60  
 shall perceive that a Jack guardant cannot office

## CORIOLANUS

me from my son Coriolanus, guess but by my entertainment with him, if thou stand'st 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 mov'd to come to thee : but being assur'd 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. 70

*Cor.* Away !

*Men.* How ? away ?

*Cor.* 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 80

Your gates against my force. Yet, for I lov'd thee,  
 Take this along, I writ it for thy sake,  
 And would have sent it. (*Gives him a letter.*) Another  
 word, Menenius,

I will not hear thee speak. This man, Aufidius, 90  
 Was my belov'd in Rome : yet thou behold'st.

*Auf.* You keep a constant temper.

*Exeunt Coriolanus and Aufidius*

*First Sent.* Now, sir, is your name Menenius ?

*Sec. Sent.* 'Tis a spell, you see, of much power : you know  
 the way home again.

*First Sent.* Do you hear how we are shent for keeping  
 your greatness back ?

*Sec. Sent.* What cause do you think I have to swoon ?

*Men.* I neither care for the world, nor your general : for  
 such things as you, I can scarce think there's any, 100  
 ye're so slight. He that hath a will to die by him-  
 self, 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 Sent.* A noble fellow, I warrant him.

*Sec. Sent.* The worthy fellow is our general. He's the  
 rock, the oak not to be wind-shaken. *Exeunt*



## CORIOLANUS

*Enter Coriolanus, Aufidius, and others*

*Cor.* 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.

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

*Cor.* This last old man,  
Whom with a crack'd heart I have sent to Rome,  
Lov'd me, above the measure of a father, 10  
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 too : 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 20  
 In the same time 'tis made? I will not.

*Enter, in mourning habits, Virgilia, Volunnia, leading  
 young Martius, 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 curtsy worth? or those doves' eyes,  
 Which can make gods forsworn? I melt, and am not  
 Of stronger earth than others: my mother bows,  
 As if Olympus to a molehill should 30  
 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.

*Vir.* My lord and husband!

*Cor.* These eyes are not the same I wore in Rome.

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

*Cor.* Like a dull actor now, 40

## CORIOLANUS

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* 50  
Of thy deep duty more impression show  
Than that of common sons.

*Vol.* O, stand up blest !  
Whilst with no softer cushion than the flint  
I kneel before thee, and unproperly  
Show duty as mistaken, all this while,  
Between the child and parent. *Kneels*

*Cor.* What 's 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 ; 60  
Murdering impossibility, to make  
What cannot be, slight work.

*Vol.* Thou art my warrior,

I help to frame thee. Do you know this lady ?

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

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

*Cor.* 70  
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 !

*Vol.* Your knee, sirrah.

*Cor.* That 's my brave boy !

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

*Cor.* 80  
I beseech you, peace :  
Or, if you 'ld 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

CORIOLANUS

To allay my rages and revenges with  
Your colder reasons.

*Vol.* O, no more, no more :  
You have said you will not grant us any thing :  
For we have nothing else to ask, but that  
Which you deny already : yet we will ask,  
That, if you fail in our request, the blame  
May hang upon your hardness, therefore hear us.

90

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

*Vol.* 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,

101

Whereto we are bound ? alack, or must we lose  
 The country our dear nurse, or else thy person, 110  
 Our comfort in the country. We must find  
 An evident calamity, though we had  
 Our wish, which side should win. For either thou  
 Must as a foreign recreant be led  
 With manacles thorough our streets, or else  
 Triumphantly tread on thy country's ruin,  
 And bear the palm, for having bravely shed  
 Thy wife and children's blood : for myself, son,  
 I purpose not to wait on fortune, till  
 These wars determine : if I cannot persuade thee, 120  
 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.

*Vir.* 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.

*Cor.* Not of a woman's tenderness to be,  
 Requires nor child nor woman's face to see : 130  
 I have sat too long. *Rising*

## CORIOLANUS

*Vol.*

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 blest  
For making up this peace.' Thou know'st, great son,  
The end of war's uncertain : but this certain, 141  
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, 150  
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 160  
 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 170  
 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 Corioles, and his child



CORIOLANUS

Like him by chance : yet give us our dispatch : 180  
 I am hush'd until our city be a-fire,  
 And then I'll speak a little.

*Cor.* (*after holding her by the hand, silent*) 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, 190  
 I'll frame convenient peace. Now, good Aufidius,  
 Were you in my stead, would you have heard  
 A mother less ? or granted less, Aufidius ?

*Auf.* I was mov'd withal.

*Cor.* 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 !

*Auf.* (*aside*) I am glad thou hast set thy mercy, and thy  
 honour,

200

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

*The Ladies make signs to Coriolanus*

*Cor.* (to *Volumnia, Virgilia, &c.*) Ay, by and by :—  
But we will drink together : and you shall bear  
A better witness back than words, which we  
On like conditions will have counter-seal'd.  
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* 210

SCENES IV, V

*Rome*

*Enter Menenius and Sicinius*

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

*Sic.* Why, what of that ?

*Men.* 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 sentenc'd,  
and stay upon execution.

CORIOLANUS

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

*Men.* There is differency between a grub and a butterfly, 10  
yet your butterfly was a grub : this Martius is grown from man to dragon : he has wings, he 's more than a creeping thing.

*Sic.* He lov'd his mother dearly.

*Men.* 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 20  
hum is a battery. He sits in his state, as a thing made for Alexander. What he bids be done, is finish'd with his bidding. He wants nothing of a god but eternity, and a heaven to throne in.

*Sic.* Yes, mercy, if you report him truly.

*Men.* 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. 30

*Sic.* The gods be good unto us !

*Men.* No, in such a case the gods will not be good unto

us. When we banish'd him, we respected not them: and he returning to break our necks, they respect not us.

*Enter a Messenger*

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

*Enter another Messenger*

*Sic.* What 's the news? 40

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

*Sic.* Friend,  
Art thou certain this is true? is 't most certain?

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

*Trumpets; hautboys; drums beat; all together*  
The trumpets, sackbuts, psalteries, and fifes, 50  
Tabors, and cymbals, and the shouting Romans,

CORIOLANUS

Make the sun dance. Hark you! *A shout within*  
*Men.* 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,  
I'd not have given a doit. Hark, how they joy !

*Music still, with shouts*

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

*Sec. Mess.* Sir, we have all 60  
Great cause to give great thanks.

*Sic.* They are near the city ?

*Sec. Mess.* Almost at point to enter.

*Sic.* We will meet them,  
And help the joy. *Exeunt*

*Enter two Senators with Volumnia, Virgilia, Valeria, &c.*  
*passing over the stage, followed by Patricians and others*

*First Sen.* Behold our patroness, the life of Rome !  
Call all your tribes together, praise the gods,

And make triumphant fires, strew flowers before them :  
 Unshout the noise that banish'd Martius,  
 Repeat him, with the welcome of his mother ;  
 Cry, ' Welcome ladies, welcome ! '

*All.*

Welcome ladies.

Welcome !

*A flourish with drums and trumpets. Exeunt*

SCENE VI

*Corioles. A public place*

*Enter Tullus Aufidius, with Attendants*

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

*Exeunt Attendants*

*Enter three or four Conspirators of Aufidius's faction*

Most welcome !

*First Con.* How is it with our general ?

CORIOLANUS

*Auf.* Even so, 10  
 As with a man by his own alms empoison'd,  
 And with his charity slain.

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

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

*Third Con.* The people will remain uncertain, whilst  
 'Twixt you there's difference : but the fall of either  
 Makes the survivor heir of all.

*Auf.* I know it :  
 And my pretext to strike at him admits 20  
 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 Con.* Sir, his stoutness  
 When he did stand for consul, which he lost  
 By lack of stooping,—

*Auf.* That I would have spoke of :  
 Being banish'd for 't, he came unto my hearth, 30

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 did end all his ; and took some pride  
 To do myself this wrong : till at the last  
 I seem'd his follower, not partner ; and  
 He wag'd me with his countenance, as if  
 I had been mercenary.

40

*First Con.* 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—

*Auf.* 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 Con.* Your native town you enter'd like a post, 50  
 And had no welcomes home, but he returns,  
 Splitting the air with noise.



CORIOLANUS

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

*Third Con.* 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.

*Auf.* Say no more.  
Here come the lords.

60

*Enter the Lords of the city*

*All the Lords.* You are most welcome home.

*Auf.* 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.

*Auf.* He approaches, you shall hear him.

70

*Enter Coriolanus, marching with drum and colours ; the  
commoners being with him*

**Cor.** 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  
Doth more than counterpoise a full third part  
The charges of the action. We have made peace  
With no less honour to the Antiates 80  
Than shame to the Romans. And we here deliver,  
Subscrib'd by the consuls, and patricians,  
Together with the seal o' the senate, what  
We have compounded on.

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

**Cor.** Traitor ? how now ?

**Auf.** Ay, traitor, Martius !

**Cor.** Martius !

**Auf.** Ay, Martius, Caius Martius : dost thou think  
I'll grace thee with that robbery, thy stol'n name  
Coriolanus, in Corioles ? 90

## CORIOLANUS

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 other.

*Cor.* Hear'st thou, Mars ? 100

*Auf.* Name not the god, thou boy of tears.

*Cor.* Ha !

*Auf.* No more.

*Cor.* 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 judgements, 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.

110

*First Lord.* Peace, both, and hear me speak.

*Cor.* 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 Corioles ;  
 Alone I did it. 'Boy !'

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

*All Consp.* Let him die for 't. 120

*All the People.* 'Tear him to pieces.' 'Do it presently.'  
 'He killed my son.' 'My daughter.' 'He killed  
 my cousin Marcus.' 'He killed my father.'

*Sec. 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.

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

*Auf.* Insolent villain ! 130

*All Consp.* Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill him !

*The Conspirators draw, and kill Coriolanus :  
 Aufidius stands on his body*

CORIOLANUS

*Lords.* Hold, hold, hold, hold !

*Auf.* My noble masters, hear me speak

*First Lord.* O Tullus,—

*Sec. Lord.* Thou hast done a deed, whereat valour will weep.

*Third Lord.* Tread not upon him. Masters all, be quiet,  
Put up your swords.

*Auf.* 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. 140

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

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

*Auf.* 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 150

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*

## Notes

I. iii. 43. *At Grecian sword, contemning*; probably the best of the emendations of F's reading, *At Grecian sword*. Contemning, *tell Valeria*. It would be tempting to think that the mysterious italicised *Contemning* concealed a proper name, if it were not that that gives a rhythm both weak and abrupt.

I. iii. 82. *Penelope . . .*; during Odysseus' absence at the siege of Troy, his wife, Penelope, wooed by many suitors, promised to give her answer when she had completed the weaving on which she was engaged. Each night she unravelled the weaving which she had done by day.

I. iv. 14. *less than be*; the sense is perfectly clear, and the mistake is one not uncommon in Shakespeare (and elsewhere) with negatives or words of a negative force; but, strictly, *less* should be *more*.

I. iv. 42. *trenches*; after *trenches* F reads *followes*, usually emended to *followed*. I think that *followes* (a weak contrast to *beat*) probably crept in from the following stage direction, and that omission is better than emendation.

I. vi. 77. *O, me alone! make you a sword of me?* Capell's punctuation (F has no question mark). Many explanations, none wholly satisfactory. Coriolanus' point appears to be that they are raising (or should raise) him as they do their swords. And I am not sure that it has been sufficiently observed that *O, me alone!* echoes *Let him alone* three lines above, and that Coriolanus is perhaps commenting on the fact that, instead of there being only one volunteer, he himself is lifted in isolation among the whole body of volunteers.

I. viii. 11. *Hector*; the famous Trojan: the Romans were supposed

to be descended from the Trojans under Æneas: and so the sense must be 'the whip wielded by your boasted ancestor,' unless we suppose a blunder as to Hector's race (or as to the Roman descent), and take it in the much more natural sense 'Hector who scourged . . .'

I. viii. 14. *Officious . . . seconds*; Aufidius's remark is of course addressed not to Coriolanus but to the Volsces who, over-officious, have shamed him by their aid (*seconds*).

I. ix. 46. *overture*; so F. A meaning can be elicited, 'let an offer of the wars be made to him (the parasite),' but there is probably corruption, and the usual emendation of *coverture* seems to me unhelpful.

I. x. 16-23. I have, rather dubiously, retained the F punctuation, from the feeling that it is probably too odd to be due merely to a compositor's carelessness. If intended, it must represent Aufidius' disjointed utterance in anger.

II. i. 56. *I can say*; almost universally emended to *I cannot say*; but as the passage is difficult in any case I prefer to retain the F<sup>2</sup> reading. And no satisfactory explanation has been offered of Menenius' gibe about *the ass in compound*. It sounds like an allusion to some well-known Latin Grammar rule or tag.

II. i. 63. *bisson*; I give the usual emendation of the F reading *beesome*, but without much conviction.

II. i. 150. *One in the neck . . .*; unless Menenius means to add two to Volumnia's count, 'number one' in the neck, and 'number two' in the thigh, his mathematics are less good than they are three lines lower. But he is much more probably reckoning, as it were on his fingers, without reference to Volumnia.

II. iii. 59. *which our divines lose by them*; i.e. 'in preaching which our divines waste their breath.'

II. iii. 241. Something has clearly dropped out, and reference to



## CORIOLANUS

North makes it clear that the missing name is *Censorinus*. We should perhaps insert the line *And Censorinus, that was so surnam'd*.

III. ii. 26. *There's no remedy . . .*; 'there's no help for it, unless you want the city to be destroyed.'

III. ii. 32. *berd*; Warburton's emendation of F *heart*.

III. iii. 132. *Making but reservation*; so F. If we retain it, it presumably means 'reserving only yourselves from banishment'; but this is not easy, and there is something to be said for Capell's emendation of *not* for *but*.

IV. i. 7-9. *fortune's blows . . .*; 'to be noble when wounded by fortune's keenest strokes needs . . .'

IV. vi. 2. *His remedies are tame, the . . .*; so F. Theobald inserted the obvious *i* in place of the comma, but the resulting sense is far from satisfactory, since the argument should be that the present peace makes the wildness of his remedies look foolish. Hence a good deal of unconvincing conjecture.

IV. vi. 99. *Hercules*; one of his labours was to fetch the golden apples of the Hesperides; but perhaps no more is intended than the picture of great strength exerted in a task which could be performed by the slightest.

IV. vi. 137. Here is first announced the motif of burning, which, as Bradley points out, runs through the rest of the play.

IV. vii. 55. *fowler*; we should perhaps accept Johnson's emendation, *Founder*.

## Glossary

MANY words and phrases in Shakespeare require glossing, not because they are in themselves unfamiliar, but for the opposite reason, that Shakespeare uses in their Elizabethan and unfamiliar sense a large number of words which seem so familiar that there is no incentive to look for them in the glossary. It is hoped that a glossary arranged as below will make it easy to see at a glance what words and phrases in any particular scene require elucidation. A number of phrases are glossed by what seems to be, in their context, the modern equivalent rather than by lexicographical glosses on the words which compose them.

### Act First

#### SCENE I

<i>line</i>	<i>line</i>
10 IS 'T A VERDICT ? is the motion carried ?	99 WHERE, whereas
15 AUTHORITY, those in authority	101 PARTICIPATE, participating
19 OBJECT, spectacle	102 AFFECTION, desire
21 SUFFERANCE, suffering	110 HIS RECEIPT, his receiving food
22 RAKES, <i>pun on the sense 'as lean as a rake'</i>	128 INCORPORATE, belonging to the same body
36 SOFT-CONSCIENC'D MEN, 'senti- mentalists'	135 CRANKS, winding passages OFFICES, <i>in same sense as 'usual offices'</i>
38 TO BE PARTLY, partly to be	148 DIGEST, understand
39 TO THE ALTITUDE OF HIS VIRTUE, as far as his valour justifies	157 RASCAL, lean deer BLOOD, condition
70 APPEAR IN YOUR IMPEDIMENT, be put in as impediments by you	161 BALE, disaster
92 DISGRACE, injuries	173 MAKE, deem
96 GULF, whirlpool	182 GARLAND, 'hero'
	191 SIDE, espouse

# CORIOLANUS

## Act I Sc. i—*continued*

<i>line</i>	196 QUARRY, heap of dead ( <i>properly of game</i> )	197 QUARTER'D, slaughtered	198 PICK, pitch	209 GENEROSITY, the nobles	249 PUTS WELL FORTH, makes a fine show		<i>line</i>	254 GIRD, gird at	257 TO BE, of being (?)	266 CENSURE, public opinion	270 DEMERITS, merits	276 SINGULARITY, normal idiosyncrasies
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### SCENE II

6 CIRCUMVENTION, power to circumvent	21 PRETENCES, intentions		24 SHORTEN'D IN OUR AIM, restricted ( <i>or ? hurried</i> ) in our design	29 FOR THE REMOVE, to raise the siege
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### SCENE III

2 COMFORTABLE, cheerful	40 TROPHY, monument	52 SPOT, pattern	59 CONFIRM'D, resolute	65 MAMMOCK'D, tore to bits		68 CRACK, a 'limb'	85 SENSIBLE, sensitive	104 DISEASE, 'wet-blanket'	108 AT A WORD, once for all
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### SCENE IV

12 FIELD'D, engaged in the open field	17 POUND, pen	43 SECONDS, supporters		54 SENSIBLY, through having senses	55 LEFT, deserted	64 MAKE REMAIN, remain
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## GLOSSARY

### SCENE V

<i>Line</i>	<i>Line</i>
4 MOVERS, busy people	18 PHYSICAL, health-giving
6 OF A DOIT, worth a doit ( <i>i.e.</i> copper coin of small value)	24 THOSE, of those

### SCENE VI

17 CONFOUND, use up	84 CAUSE WILL BE OBEY'D, occasion must be served
53 VAWARD, front line	87 OSTENTATION, manifestation
63 PROVE, try	

### SCENE VII

1 PORTS, gates	3 CENTURIES, companies of a hundred men
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### SCENE IX

14 CHARTER, licence	49 WITHOUT NOTE, without being observed
18 EFFECTED HIS GOOD WILL, done his best	60 GARLAND, honours
30 'GAINST, as a reproach to	62 TRIM BELONGING, harness apper- taining
31 TENT, cure ( <i>a tent was a roll of lint used to cleanse a wound</i> )	72 UNDERCREST, go under, <i>i.e.</i> wear ADDITION, title
36 ONLY, sole	73 FAIRNESS, best
48 DEBILE, feeble	77 ARTICULATE, negotiate

### SCENE X

2 CONDITION, terms	25 HOSPITABLE CANON, laws of hospitality
14 POTCH, poke	
21 EMBARQUEMENTS, restraints	

# CORIOLANUS

## Act Second

### SCENE I

<i>line</i>		<i>line</i>	
46	HUMOROUS, whimsical	195	CHANGE, variety
53	WEALSMEN, legislators	205	RAPTURE, fit
54	LYCURGUS, the famous Spartan lawmaker	206	CHATS, gossips about MALKIN, slut
63	BISSON CONSPICUITIES, dim vision	207	LOCKRAM, cheap linen REECHY, dirty ( <i>properly</i> with smoke)
70	FOSSET-, tap (faucet)	208	BULKS, counter in front of shop
71	REJOURN, adjourn	211	SELD-SHOWN, seldom-seen FLAMENS, priests
75	BLOODY FLAG, the war-banner (?)	212	POPULAR, of the people
88	BOTCHER, patcher	213	VULGAR STATION, place in the crowd
90	CHEAP ESTIMATION, low valuation	214	DAMASK, red
92	DEUCALION, the Noah of Greek mythology	223	AND END, to where he should end
115	MAKE A LIP, make a face at, 'cock snooks'	232	NAPLES VESTURE, threadbare garment
117	EMPIRICUTIC, quackish	240	GOOD WILLS, as your advantage demands
158	NERVY, sinewy	249	PROVAND, food
159	DECLINES, falls ( <i>as a sword falls</i> )		
187	BE GRAFTED TO YOUR RELISH, improved as you would like (or (?)) so as to relish you)		

### SCENE II

27	BONNET, take the hat off	139	PASS, omit ( <i>cf. Amer. 'pass up'</i> )
103	SPEAK HIM HOME, do him justice	144	WITH YOUR FORM, in the customary manner
117	FATIGATE, fatigued	156	REQUIRE, ask
123	HE CANNOT . . . HONOURS, the honours will sit well on him		

# GLOSSARY

## SCENE III

<i>line</i>		<i>line</i>	
1	ONCE, once for all	195	ARTICLE, stipulation
34	YOU MAY, YOU MAY, 'go along with you'	211	PIECE, back
96	CONDITION, quality	247	SCALING, weighing
	THEY ACCOUNT GENTLE, they make much of	250	PUTTING ON, instigation
114	WOOLVISH, woollen (?)	251	DRAWN, collected
172	FURTHER WITH YOU, further concern with you	257	ANSWER THE VANTAGE OF HIS ANGER, take the chance his anger gives

## Act Third

### SCENE I

3	COMPOSITION, agreement	98	VAIL, make stoop
6	WORN, exhausted	101	BY, beside ( <i>i.e. in the senate</i> )
9	SAFE-GUARD, safe-conduct	124	THREAD, file through
16	TO HOPELESS RESTITUTION, be- yond hope of redemption	129	NATIVE, cause
23	FRANK THEM, trick themselves out	131	DIGEST, comprehend
24	AGAINST ALL NOBLE SUFFERANCE, beyond what the nobility can tolerate	145	CONCLUDE, settle a policy
47	SITHENCE, since	154	JUMP, 'kill or cure'
50	RUB, obstacle ( <i>met. from bowls</i> )	166	GREATER BENCH, <i>i.e. the senate</i>
66	MEINIE, multitude	172	ÆDILES, officers of justice
70	COCKLE, weeds	174	ATTACH, arrest
79	TETTER, cause skin sores	205	RANGES, occupies a position
82	OF THEIR INFIRMITY, with human weaknesses like theirs	241	ONE TIME WILL OWE ANOTHER, you will have another chance
90	FROM, wide of	247	TAG, canaille
		303	KAM, crooked, 'cock-eyed'
		304	MERELY, absolutely
		321	BOLTED, sifted

# CORIOLANUS

## SCENE II

<i>line</i>		<i>line</i>	
5	BEAM, range	86	PERSON, <i>i.e.</i> art adapted to it
12	ORDINANCE, rank	99	UNBARE'D SCONCE, uncovered head
39	ABSOLUTE, immovable	102	THIS SINGLE PLOT, only my own person
41	BUT WHEN EXTREMITIES SPEAK, except when a crisis demands it	113	QUIRED, sounds in unison with
55	ROTEd, learned by rote	116	TENT, encamp
74	HERE BE WITH THEM, make this concession to them	121	SURCEASE, cease
75	BUSSING, kissing	133	COG, trick
79	HUMBLE, <i>verb</i>	143	ACCUSE ME BY INVENTION, invent accusations

## SCENE III

26	WORTH, 'money's worth'	45	ALLOW, admit the status of
29-30	LOOKS WITH US TO BREAK, is out ally towards breaking	64	SEASON'D, established
43	DETERMINE, be concluded	82	CAPITAL, <i>the same sense as in 'capital charge'</i>

## Act Fourth

### SCENE I

33	CAUTELOUS, crafty	49	OF NOBLE TOUCH, of tried ( <i>by the touchstone</i> ) nobility
36	EXPOSTURE, exposure		

### SCENE III

9	APPEAR'D, made evident	48	YOU TAKE MY PART FROM ME, you take the words out of my mouth
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# GLOSSARY

## SCENE IV

<i>line</i>		<i>line</i>	
17	DISSENSION OF A DOIT, 'two-penny halfpenny quarrel'	25	GIVE ME WAY, give me the chance

## SCENE V

14	COMPANIONS, tramps	154	SET UP, spin
34	BATT'EN, gorge	187	DIRECTLY, in plain truth
46	MEDDLE WITH MY MASTER, <i>i.e.</i> why bring him into it?	188	SCOTCH'D, slashed
63	SHOW'ST, appearest	189	CARBONADO, a piece of meat slashed for broiling
72	MEMORY, memorial	202	SOWL, drag
86	WREAK, vengeance	204	POLL'D, razed
87-88	MAIMS OF SHAME, shameful wounds	225	VENT, utterance
151	GAVE, told	226	MULL'D, dulled

## SCENE VI

59	TURNS THEIR COUNTENANCES, makes them change colour	86	FRANCHISES, liberties
72	ATONE, unite	97	OCCUPATION, workers
		125	POINTS, orders

## SCENE VII

37	EVEN, temperately	44	GARB, behaviour
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## Act Fifth

### SCENE I

3	IN A MOST DEAR PARTICULAR, in an intimate personal relation	16	RACK'D, strained (?)
6	COY'D, was reluctant	37	INSTANT, at the moment



# CORIOLANUS

## SCENE II

*line*

10 LOTS TO BLANKS, any odds  
13 PASSABLE, current  
29 FACTIONARY, active as partisan  
41 FRONT, confront  
59 COMPANION, rascal

*line*

61 JACK GUARDANT, jack-in-office  
OFFICE ME FROM, use his position  
to keep me from  
81-82 I OWE MY REVENGE PROPERLY,  
my revenge is my own affair  
96 SHENT, rated

## SCENE III

3 PLAINLY, openly  
74 SEA-MARK, any object by which a  
course is set, here a rock  
FLAW, violent gust  
82 CAPITULATE, negotiate

104 CAPITAL, fatal  
201-202 WORK MYSELF A FORMER  
FORTUNE, reinstate my for-  
tunes

## SCENE IV

18 ENGINE, engine of war

22 FOR, to represent (*i.e. a statue*)

## SCENE VI

6 PORTS, gates  
37 END, garner (*dial.*)  
50 POST, messenger

107 NOTION, understanding  
121 PRESENTLY, immediately  
138 OWE YOU, hold in store for you



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