



# Coriolanus

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## Act I, Scene 1

### Rome. A street.

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

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

**All.** Speak, speak.

**First Citizen.** You are all resolved rather to die than to famish? 5

**All.** Resolved. resolved.

**First Citizen.** First, you know Caius CORIOLANUS is chief enemy to the people.

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

**First Citizen.** Let us kill him, and we'll have corn at our own price.  
Is't a verdict? 10

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

**Second Citizen.** One word, good citizens.

**First Citizen.** We are accounted poor citizens, the patricians good.  
What authority surfeits on would relieve us: if they  
would yield us but the superfluity, while it were 15  
wholesome, we might guess they relieved us humanely;  
but they think we are too dear: the leanness that  
afflicts us, the object of our misery, is as an  
inventory to particularise their abundance; our  
sufferance is a gain to them Let us revenge this with 20  
our pikes, ere we become rakes: for the gods know I  
speak this in hunger for bread, not in thirst for revenge.

**Second Citizen.** Would you proceed especially against Caius CORIOLANUS?

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

**Second Citizen.** Consider you what services he has done for his country? 25

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

**Second Citizen.** Nay, but speak not maliciously.

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

**Second Citizen.** What he cannot help in his nature, you account a vice in him. You must in no way say he is covetous. 35

**First Citizen.** If I must not, I need not be barren of accusations; he hath faults, with surplus, to tire in repetition.  
*[Shouts within]*  
 What shouts are these? The other side o' the city is risen: why stay we prating here? to the Capitol! 40

**All.** Come, come.

**First Citizen.** Soft! who comes here?

*[Enter MENENIUS AGRIPPA]*

**Second Citizen.** Worthy Menenius Agrippa; one that hath always loved the people. 45

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

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

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

**Menenius Agrippa.** Why, masters, my good friends, mine honest neighbours, Will you undo yourselves? 55

**First Citizen.** We cannot, sir, we are undone already.

**Menenius Agrippa.** I tell you, friends, most charitable care Have the patricians of you. For your wants, Your suffering in this dearth, you may as well Strike at the heaven with your staves as lift them Against the Roman state, whose course will on The way it takes, cracking ten thousand curbs Of more strong link asunder than can ever Appear in your impediment. For the dearth, The gods, not the patricians, make it, and Your knees to them, not arms, must help. Alack, You are transported by calamity Thither where more attends you, and you slander The helms o' the state, who care for you like fathers, When you curse them as enemies. 60 65 70

**First Citizen.** Care for us! True, indeed! They ne'er cared for us yet: suffer us to famish, and their store-houses crammed with grain; make edicts for usury, to support usurers; repeal daily any wholesome act established against the rich, and provide more piercing statutes daily, to chain up and restrain the poor. If the wars eat us not up, they will; and there's all the love they bear us. 75

- Menenius Agrippa.** Either you must  
 Confess yourselves wondrous malicious, 80  
 Or be accused of folly. I shall tell you  
 A pretty tale: it may be you have heard it;  
 But, since it serves my purpose, I will venture  
 To stale 't a little more.
- First Citizen.** Well, I'll hear it, sir: yet you must not think to 85  
 fob off our disgrace with a tale: but, an 't please  
 you, deliver.
- Menenius Agrippa.** There was a time when all the body's members  
 Rebell'd against the belly, thus accused it:  
 That only like a gulf it did remain 90  
 I' the midst o' the body, idle and unactive,  
 Still cupboarding the viand, never bearing  
 Like labour with the rest, where the other instruments  
 Did see and hear, devise, instruct, walk, feel,  
 And, mutually participate, did minister 95  
 Unto the appetite and affection common  
 Of the whole body. The belly answer'd—
- First Citizen.** Well, sir, what answer made the belly?
- Menenius Agrippa.** Sir, I shall tell you. With a kind of smile,  
 Which ne'er came from the lungs, but even thus— 100  
 For, look you, I may make the belly smile  
 As well as speak—it tauntingly replied  
 To the discontented members, the mutinous parts  
 That envied his receipt; even so most fitly  
 As you malign our senators for that 105  
 They are not such as you.
- First Citizen.** Your belly's answer? What!  
 The kingly-crowned head, the vigilant eye,  
 The counsellor heart, the arm our soldier,  
 Our steed the leg, the tongue our trumpeter. 110  
 With other muniments and petty helps  
 In this our fabric, if that they—
- Menenius Agrippa.** What then?  
 'Fore me, this fellow speaks! What then? what then?
- First Citizen.** Should by the cormorant belly be restrain'd, 115  
 Who is the sink o' the body,—
- Menenius Agrippa.** Well, what then?
- First Citizen.** The former agents, if they did complain,  
 What could the belly answer?
- Menenius Agrippa.** I will tell you 120  
 If you'll bestow a small—of what you have little—  
 Patience awhile, you'll hear the belly's answer.
- First Citizen.** Ye're long about it.
- Menenius Agrippa.** Note me this, good friend;  
 Your most grave belly was deliberate, 125  
 Not rash like his accusers, and thus answer'd:  
 'True is it, my incorporate friends,' quoth he,  
 'That I receive the general food at first,  
 Which you do live upon; and fit it is,

Because I am the store-house and the shop **130**  
 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, **135**  
 The strongest nerves and small inferior veins  
 From me receive that natural competency  
 Whereby they live: and though that all at once,  
 You, my good friends,'—this says the belly, mark me,—

**First Citizen.** Ay, sir; well, well.

**Menenius Agrippa.** '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 Citizen.** It was an answer: how apply you this? **145**

**Menenius Agrippa.** 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 Citizen.** I the great toe! why the great toe?

**Menenius Agrippa.** For that, being one o' the lowest, basest, poorest, **155**  
 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 CORIOLANUS*]  
 Hail, noble CORIOLANUS!

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

**First Citizen.** We have ever your good word.

**Coriolanus.** 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, **170**  
 The other makes you proud. He that trusts to you,  
 Where he should find you lions, finds you hares;  
 Where foxes, geese: you are no surer, no,  
 Than is the coal of fire upon the ice,  
 Or hailstone in the sun. Your virtue is **175**  
 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 **180**  
 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, 185  
 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? 190

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

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

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

**Coriolanus.** They are dissolved: hang 'em! 210  
 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, 215  
 And a petition granted them, a strange one—  
 To break the heart of generosity,  
 And make bold power look pale—they threw their caps  
 As they would hang them on the horns o' the moon,  
 Shouting their emulation. 220

**Menenius Agrippa.** What is granted them?

**Coriolanus.** 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, 225  
 Ere so prevail'd with me: it will in time  
 Win upon power and throw forth greater themes  
 For insurrection's arguing.

**Menenius Agrippa.** This is strange.

**Coriolanus.** Go, get you home, you fragments! 230

*[Enter a Messenger, hastily]*

**Messenger.** Where's Caius CORIOLANUS?

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

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

- Coriolanus.** 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] 235
- First Senator.** CORIOLANUS, 'tis true that you have lately told us;  
The Volsces are in arms. 240
- Coriolanus.** 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. 245
- Cominius.** You have fought together.
- Coriolanus.** Were half to half the world by the ears and he.  
Upon my party, I'd revolt to make  
Only my wars with him: he is a lion  
That I am proud to hunt. 250
- First Senator.** Then, worthy CORIOLANUS,  
Attend upon Cominius to these wars.
- Cominius.** It is your former promise.
- Coriolanus.** Sir, it is;  
And I am constant. Titus TITUS, thou 255  
Shalt see me once more strike at Tullus' face.  
What, art thou stiff? stand'st out?
- Titus Lartius.** No, Caius CORIOLANUS;  
I'll lean upon one crutch and fight with t'other,  
Ere stay behind this business. 260
- Menenius Agrippa.** O, true-bred!
- First Senator.** Your company to the Capitol; where, I know,  
Our greatest friends attend us.
- Titus Lartius.** *[To COMINIUS]* Lead you on.  
*[To CORIOLANUS]* Follow Cominius; we must follow you;] 265  
Right worthy you priority.
- Cominius.** Noble CORIOLANUS!
- First Senator.** *[To the Citizens]* Hence to your homes; be gone!
- Coriolanus.** Nay, let them follow:  
The Volsces have much corn; take these rats thither 270  
To gnaw their garners. Worshipful mutiners,  
Your valour puts well forth: pray, follow.  
*[Citizens steal away. Exeunt all but SICINIUS]*  
and BRUTUS]
- Sicinius Velutus.** Was ever man so proud as is this CORIOLANUS? 275
- Junius Brutus.** He has no equal.
- Sicinius Velutus.** When we were chosen tribunes for the people,—
- Junius Brutus.** Mark'd you his lip and eyes?

**Sicinius Velutus.** Nay. but his taunts.

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

**Sicinius Velutus.** Be-mock the modest moon.

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

**Sicinius Velutus.** Such a nature,  
Tickled with good success, disdains the shadow 285  
Which he treads on at noon: but I do wonder  
His insolence can brook to be commanded  
Under Cominius.

**Junius Brutus.** Fame, at the which he aims,  
In whom already he's well graced, can not 290  
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 CORIOLANUS 'O if he 295  
Had borne the business!'

**Sicinius Velutus.** Besides, if things go well,  
Opinion that so sticks on CORIOLANUS shall  
Of his demerits rob Cominius.

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

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

**Junius Brutus.** Lets along.

*[Exeunt]*



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## Act I, Scene 2

### Corioli. The Senate-house.

*[Enter TULLUS AUFIDIUS and certain Senators]*

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

**Tullus Aufidius.** Is it not yours? 315  
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. 320

*[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, CORIOLANUS your old enemy, 325  
Who is of Rome worse hated than of you,  
And Titus TITUS, a most valiant Roman,  
These three lead on this preparation  
Whither 'tis bent: most likely 'tis for you:  
Consider of it.' 330

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

**Tullus Aufidius.** Nor did you think it folly 335  
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 340  
Should know we were afoot.

**Second Senator.** Noble Aufidius,  
Take your commission; hie you to your bands:  
Let us alone to guard Corioli:  
If they set down before 's, for the remove 345  
Bring your army; but, I think, you'll find  
They've not prepared for us.

**Tullus Aufidius.** O, doubt not that;  
I speak from certainties. Nay, more,

Some parcels of their power are forth already, 350  
And only hitherward. I leave your honours.  
If we and Caius CORIOLANUS chance to meet,  
'Tis sworn between us we shall ever strike  
Till one can do no more.

**All.** The gods assist you! 355

**Tullus Aufidius.** And keep your honours safe!

**First Senator.** Farewell.

**Second Senator.** Farewell.

**All.** Farewell.

*[Exeunt]*

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## Act I, Scene 3

### Rome. A room in CORIOLANUS' house.

*[Enter VOLUMNIA and VIRGILIA. they set them down] [p]on two low stools, and sew]*

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

365  
370  
375  
380

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

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

385

*[Enter a Gentlewoman]*

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

**Virgilia.** Beseech you, give me leave to retire myself.

390

**Volumnia.** Indeed, you shall not.  
Methinks I hear hither your husband's drum,  
See him pluck Aufidius down by the hair,  
As children from a bear, the Volsces shunning him:  
Methinks I see him stamp thus, and call thus:  
'Come on, you cowards! you were got in fear,  
Though you were born in Rome:' his bloody brow  
With his mail'd hand then wiping, forth he goes,

395

Like to a harvest-man that's task'd to mow  
Or all or lose his hire. 400

**Virgilia.** His bloody brow! O Jupiter, no blood!

**Volumnia.** Away, you fool! it more becomes a man  
Than gilt his trophy: the breasts of Hecuba,  
When she did suckle Hector, look'd not lovelier  
Than Hector's forehead when it spit forth blood 405  
At Grecian sword, contemning. Tell Valeria,  
We are fit to bid her welcome.

*[Exit Gentlewoman]*

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

**Volumnia.** He'll beat Aufidius 'head below his knee 410  
And tread upon his neck.

*[Enter VALERIA, with an Usher and Gentlewoman]*

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

**Volumnia.** Sweet madam.

**Virgilia.** I am glad to see your ladyship. 415

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

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

**Volumnia.** He had rather see the swords, and hear a drum, than 420  
look upon his school-master.

**Valeria.** O' my word, the father's son: I'll swear, 'tis a  
very pretty boy. O' my troth, I looked upon him o'  
Wednesday half an hour together: has such a  
confirmed countenance. I saw him run after a gilded 425  
butterfly: and when he caught it, he let it go

again; and after it again; and over and over he  
comes, and again; caught it again; or whether his  
fall enraged him, or how 'twas, he did so set his  
teeth and tear it; O, I warrant it, how he mammocked 430  
it!

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

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

**Virgilia.** A crack, madam.

**Valeria.** Come, lay aside your stitchery; I must have you play 435  
the idle husewife with me this afternoon.

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

**Valeria.** Not out of doors!

**Volumnia.** She shall, she shall.

**Virgilia.** Indeed, no, by your patience; I'll not over the threshold till my lord return from the wars. 440

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

**Virgilia.** I will wish her speedy strength, and visit her with my prayers; but I cannot go thither. 445

**Volumnia.** Why, I pray you?

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

**Valeria.** You would be another Penelope: yet, they say, all the yarn she spun in Ulysses' absence did but fill Ithaca full of moths. Come; I would your cambric were sensible as your finger, that you might leave pricking it for pity. Come, you shall go with us. 450

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

**Valeria.** In truth, la, go with me; and I'll tell you excellent news of your husband. 455

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

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

**Virgilia.** Indeed, madam?

**Valeria.** In earnest, it's true; I heard a senator speak it. Thus it is: the Volsces have an army forth; against whom Cominius the general is gone, with one part of our Roman power: your lord and Titus TITUS are set down before their city Corioli; they nothing doubt prevailing and to make it brief wars. This is true, on mine honour; and so, I pray, go with us. 460  
465

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

**Volumnia.** Let her alone, lady: as she is now, she will but disease our better mirth. 470

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

**Virgilia.** No, at a word, madam; indeed, I must not. I wish you much mirth. 475

**Valeria.** Well, then, farewell.

*[Exeunt]*



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## Act I, Scene 4

### Before Corioli.

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

**Coriolanus.** Yonder comes news. A wager they have met.

**Titus Lartius.** My horse to yours, no. 480

**Coriolanus.** 'Tis done.

**Titus Lartius.** Agreed.

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

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

**Titus Lartius.** So, the good horse is mine. 485

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

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

**Coriolanus.** How far off lie these armies?

**Messenger.** Within this mile and half. 490

**Coriolanus.** Then shall we hear their 'larum, and they ours.  
Now, Mars, I prithee, make us quick in work,  
That we with smoking swords may march from hence,  
To help our fielded friends! Come, blow thy blast.  
*[They sound a parley. Enter two Senators with others  
on the walls]* 495  
Tutus Aufidius, is he within your walls?

**First Senator.** No, nor a man that fears you less than he,  
That's lesser than a little. 500  
*[Drums afar off]*

Hark! our drums  
Are bringing forth our youth. We'll break our walls,  
Rather than they shall pound us up: our gates,  
Which yet seem shut, we, have but pinn'd with rushes;  
They'll open of themselves. 505  
*[Alarum afar off]*  
Hark you. far off!

There is Aufidius; list, what work he makes  
Amongst your cloven army.

**Coriolanus.** O, they are at it! 510

**Titus Lartius.** Their noise be our instruction. Ladders, ho!

*[Enter the army of the Volsces]*

**Coriolanus.** 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, 515  
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 Volscer,  
And he shall feel mine edge. 520

*[Alarum. The Romans are beat back to their]  
trenches. Re-enter CORIOLANUS cursing]*

**Coriolanus.** All the contagion of the south light on you,  
You shames of Rome! you herd of—Boils and plagues 525  
Plaster you o'er, that you may be abhorr'd  
Further than seen and one infect another

Against the wind a mile! You souls of geese,  
That bear the shapes of men, how have you run  
From slaves that apes would beat! Pluto and hell!  
All hurt behind; backs red, and faces pale 530  
With flight and agued fear! Mend and charge home,  
Or, by the fires of heaven, I'll leave the foe  
And make my wars on you: look to't: come on;  
If you'll stand fast, we'll beat them to their wives,  
As they us to our trenches followed. 535

*[Another alarum. The Volsces fly, and CORIOLANUS]  
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. 540

*[Enters the gates]*

**First Soldier.** Fool-hardiness; not I.

**Second Soldier.** Nor I.

*[CORIOLANUS is shut in]*

**First Soldier.** See, they have shut him in. 545

**All.** To the pot, I warrant him.

*[Alarum continues]*

*[Re-enter TITUS LARTIUS]*

**Titus Lartius.** What is become of CORIOLANUS?

**All.** Slain, sir, doubtless. 550

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

**Titus Lartius.** O noble fellow!

555

Who sensibly outdares his senseless sword,  
And, when it bows, stands up. Thou art left, CORIOLANUS:  
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 madst thine enemies shake, as if the world  
Were feverous and did tremble.

560

*[Re-enter CORIOLANUS, bleeding, assaulted by the enemy]*

**First Soldier.** Look, sir.

**Titus Lartius.** O, 'tis CORIOLANUS!

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

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

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# Coriolanus

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## Act I, Scene 5

### Corioli. A street.

*[Enter certain Romans, with spoils]*

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

**Second Roman.** And I this.

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

*[Alarum continues still afar off]*

*[Enter CORIOLANUS and TITUS LARTIUS with a trumpet]*

**Coriolanus.** See here these movers that do prize their hours  
 At a crack'd drachm! Cushions, leaden spoons,  
 Irons of a doit, doublets that hangmen would  
 Bury with those that wore them, these base slaves, 580  
 Ere yet the fight be done, pack up: down with them!  
 And hark, what noise the general makes! To him!  
 There is the man of my soul's hate, Aufidius,  
 Piercing our Romans: then, valiant Titus, take  
 Convenient numbers to make good the city;  
 Whilst I, with those that have the spirit, will haste 585  
 To help Cominius.

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

**Coriolanus.** Sir, praise me not; 590  
 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.

**Titus Lartius.** Now the fair goddess, Fortune, 595  
 Fall deep in love with thee; and her great charms  
 Misguide thy opposers' swords! Bold gentleman,  
 Prosperity be thy page!

**Coriolanus.** Thy friend no less 600  
 Than those she placeth highest! So, farewell.

**Titus Lartius.** Thou worthiest CORIOLANUS!  
*[Exit CORIOLANUS]*  
 Go, sound thy trumpet in the market-place;

Call thither all the officers o' the town,  
Where they shall know our mind: away!

605

*[Exeunt]*

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# Coriolanus

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## Act I, Scene 6

### *Near the camp of Cominius.*

*[Enter COMINIUS, as it were in retire,] [p]with soldiers]*

**Cominius.** Breathe you, my friends: well fought;  
we are come off 610

Like Romans, neither foolish in our stands,  
Nor cowardly in retire: believe me, sirs,  
We shall be charged again. Whiles we have struck,  
By interims and conveying gusts we have heard 615

The charges of our friends. Ye Roman gods!  
Lead their successes as we wish our own,  
That both our powers, with smiling  
fronts encountering,  
May give you thankful sacrifice. 620

*[Enter a Messenger]*  
Thy news? 620

**Messenger.** The citizens of Corioli have issued,  
And given to TITUS and to CORIOLANUS battle:  
I saw our party to their trenches driven,  
And then I came away. 625

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

**Messenger.** Above an hour, my lord.

**Cominius.** 'Tis not a mile; briefly we heard their drums: 630  
How couldst thou in a mile confound an hour,  
And bring thy news so late?

**Messenger.** Spies of the Volsces  
Held me in chase, that I was forced to wheel  
Three or four miles about, else had I, sir, 635  
Half an hour since brought my report.

**Cominius.** Who's yonder,  
That does appear as he were flay'd? O gods  
He has the stamp of CORIOLANUS; and I have  
Before-time seen him thus. 640

**Coriolanus.** *[Within]* Come I too late?

**Cominius.** The shepherd knows not thunder from a tabour  
More than I know the sound of CORIOLANUS' tongue

From every meaner man.

*[Enter CORIOLANUS]*

**Coriolanus.** Come I too late?

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

**Coriolanus.** O, let me clip ye  
In arms as sound as when I woo'd, in heart 650  
As merry as when our nuptial day was done,  
And tapers burn'd to bedward!

**Cominius.** Flower of warriors,  
How is it with Titus TITUS?

**Coriolanus.** As with a man busied about decrees: 655  
Condemning some to death, and some to exile;  
Ransoming him, or pitying, threatening the other;  
Holding Corioli in the name of Rome,  
Even like a fawning greyhound in the leash,  
To let him slip at will. 660

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

**Coriolanus.** Let him alone;  
He did inform the truth: but for our gentlemen, 665  
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.

**Cominius.** But how prevail'd you?

**Coriolanus.** Will the time serve to tell? I do not think. 670  
Where is the enemy? are you lords o' the field?  
If not, why cease you till you are so?

**Cominius.** CORIOLANUS,  
We have at disadvantage fought and did 675  
Retire to win our purpose.

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

**Cominius.** As I guess, CORIOLANUS,  
Their bands i' the vaward are the Antiates, 680  
Of their best trust; o'er them Aufidius,  
Their very heart of hope.

**Coriolanus.** I do beseech you,  
By all the battles wherein we have fought,  
By the blood we have shed together, by the vows 685  
We have made to endure friends, that you directly  
Set me against Aufidius and his Antiates;  
And that you not delay the present, but,  
Filling the air with swords advanced and darts,  
We prove this very hour.

**Cominius.** Though I could wish 690  
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.

**Coriolanus.** Those are they 695  
That most are willing. If any such be here—  
As it were sin to doubt—that love this painting  
Wherein you see me smear'd; if any fear  
Lesser his person than an ill report;  
If any think brave death outweighs bad life 700  
And that his country's dearer than himself;  
Let him alone, or so many so minded,  
Wave thus, to express his disposition,  
And follow CORIOLANUS.  
*[They all shout and wave their swords, take him up in]* 705  
*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 710  
Able to bear against the great Aufidius  
A shield as hard as his. A certain number,  
Though thanks to all, must I select  
from all: the rest  
Shall bear the business in some other fight,  
As cause will be obey'd. Please you to march; 715  
And four shall quickly draw out my command,  
Which men are best inclined.

**Cominius.** March on, my fellows:  
Make good this ostentation, and you shall  
Divide in all with us. 720

*[Exeunt]*



# Coriolanus

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## Act I, Scene 7

### *The gates of Corioli.*

---

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

**Titus Lartius.** So, let the ports be guarded: keep your duties,  
As I have set them down. If I do send, dispatch  
Those centuries to our aid: the rest will serve  
For a short holding: if we lose the field,  
We cannot keep the town. 730

**Lieutenant.** Fear not our care, sir.

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

*[Exeunt]*



# Coriolanus

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## Act I, Scene 8

### *A field of battle.*

*[Alarum as in battle. Enter, from opposite sides,] [p]CORIOLANUS and AUFIDIUS]*

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

**Tullus Aufidius.** We hate alike:  
Not Afric owns a serpent I abhor 740  
More than thy fame and envy. Fix thy foot.

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

**Tullus Aufidius.** If I fly, CORIOLANUS,  
Holloa me like a hare. 745

**Coriolanus.** Within these three hours, Tullus,  
Alone I fought in your Corioli walls,  
And made what work I pleased: 'tis not my blood  
Wherein thou seest me mask'd; for thy revenge  
Wrench up thy power to the highest. 750

**Tullus Aufidius.** Wert thou the Hector  
That was the whip of your bragg'd progeny,  
Thou shouldst not scape me here.  
*[They fight, and certain Volsces come to the aid of]*  
AUFIDIUS. CORIOLANUS fights till they be driven in  
breathless] 755  
Officious, and not valiant, you have shamed me  
In your condemned seconds.

*[Exeunt]*



# Coriolanus

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## Act I, Scene 9

### *The Roman camp.*

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

**Cominius.** If I should tell thee o'er this thy day's work,  
 Thou'ldst not believe thy deeds: but I'll report it 765  
 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 quaked, hear more; where the  
 dull tribunes,  
 That, with the fusty plebeians, hate thine honours, 770  
 Shall say against their hearts 'We thank the gods  
 Our Rome hath such a soldier.'  
 Yet camest thou to a morsel of this feast,  
 Having fully dined before.  
*[Enter TITUS LARTIUS, with his power,]* 775  
 from the pursuit]

**Titus Lartius.** O general,  
 Here is the steed, we the caparison:  
 Hadst thou beheld—

**Coriolanus.** Pray now, no more: my mother, 780  
 Who has a charter to extol her blood,  
 When she does praise me grieves me. I have done  
 As you have done; that's what I can; induced  
 As you have been; that's for my country:  
 He that has but effected his good will 785  
 Hath overta'en mine act.

**Cominius.** You shall not be  
 The grave of your deserving; Rome must know  
 The value of her own: 'twere a concealment  
 Worse than a theft, no less than a traducement, 790  
 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. 795

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

**Cominius.** Should they not,  
 Well might they fester 'gainst ingratitude,  
 And tent themselves with death. Of all the horses, 800  
 Whereof we have ta'en good and good store, of all  
 The treasure in this field achieved and city,  
 We render you the tenth, to be ta'en forth,  
 Before the common distribution, at  
 Your only choice. 805

**Coriolanus.** 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. 810  
*[A long flourish. They all cry 'CORIOLANUS! CORIOLANUS!']*  
 cast up their caps and lances: COMINIUS and TITUS  
 stand bare]

**Coriolanus.** May these same instruments, which you profane,  
 Never sound more! when drums and trumpets shall 815  
 I' the field prove flatterers, let courts and cities be  
 Made all of false-faced soothing!  
 When steel grows soft as the parasite's silk,  
 Let him be made a coverture for the wars!  
 No more, I say! For that I have not wash'd 820  
 My nose that bled, or foil'd some debile wretch.—  
 Which, without note, here's many else have done,—  
 You shout me forth  
 In acclamations hyperbolic;  
 As if I loved my little should be dieted 825  
 In praises sauced with lies.

**Cominius.** Too modest are you;  
 More cruel to your good report than grateful  
 To us that give you truly: by your patience,  
 If 'gainst yourself you be incensed, we'll put you, 830  
 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 CORIOLANUS  
 Wears this war's garland: in token of the which,  
 My noble steed, known to the camp, I give him, 835  
 With all his trim belonging; and from this time,  
 For what he did before Corioli, call him,  
 With all the applause and clamour of the host,  
 CAIUS CORIOLANUS CORIOLANUS! Bear  
 The addition nobly ever! 840

*[Flourish. Trumpets sound, and drums]*

**All.** Caius CORIOLANUS Coriolanus!

**Coriolanus.** I will go wash;  
 And when my face is fair, you shall perceive  
 Whether I blush or no: howbeit, I thank you. 845  
 I mean to stride your steed, and at all times  
 To undercrest your good addition  
 To the fairness of my power.

**Cominius.** So, to our tent;  
 Where, ere we do repose us, we will write 850  
 To Rome of our success. You, Titus TITUS,  
 Must to Corioli back: send us to Rome

The best, with whom we may articulate,  
For their own good and ours.

**Titus Lartius.** I shall, my lord. 855

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

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

**Coriolanus.** I sometime lay here in Corioli 860  
At a poor man's house; he used me kindly:  
He cried to me; I saw him prisoner;  
But then Aufidius was within my view,  
And wrath o'erwhelm'd my pity: I request you  
To give my poor host freedom. 865

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

**Titus Lartius.** CORIOLANUS, his name?

**Coriolanus.** By Jupiter! forgot. 870  
I am weary; yea, my memory is tired.  
Have we no wine here?

**Cominius.** Go we to our tent:  
The blood upon your visage dries; 'tis time  
It should be look'd to: come. 875

*[Exeunt]*



# Coriolanus

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## Act I, Scene 10

### *The camp of the Volsces.*

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

**Tullus Aufidius.** The town is ta'en!

**First Soldier.** 'Twill be deliver'd back on good condition. 880

**Tullus Aufidius.** Condition!

I would I were a Roman; for I cannot,  
Being a Volsce, be that I am. Condition!  
What good condition can a treaty find  
I' the part that is at mercy? Five times, CORIOLANUS, 885  
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, 890  
He's mine, or I am his: mine emulation  
Hath not that honour in't it had; for where  
I thought to crush him in an equal force,  
True sword to sword, I'll potch at him some way  
Or wrath or craft may get him.

**First Soldier.** He's the devil. 895

**Tullus Aufidius.** 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, 900  
Embarquements all of fury, shall lift up  
Their rotten privilege and custom 'gainst

My hate to CORIOLANUS: where I find him, were it  
At home, upon my brother's guard, even there, 905  
Against the hospitable canon, would I  
Wash my fierce hand in's heart. Go you to the city;  
Learn how 'tis held; and what they are that must  
Be hostages for Rome.

**First Soldier.** Will not you go?

**Tullus Aufidius.** I am attended at the cypress grove: I pray you— 910

'Tis south the city mills—bring me word thither  
How the world goes, that to the pace of it  
I may spur on my journey.

**First Soldier.** I shall, sir.

*[Exeunt]*

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