



Coriolanus

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Act III, Scene 1

Rome. A street.

[Cornets. Enter CORIOLANUS, MENENIUS, all the] [p]Gentry, COMINIUS, TITUS LARTIUS, and other Senators]

Coriolanus. Tullus Aufidius then had made new head?

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

Coriolanus. So then the Volsces stand but as at first,
Ready, when time shall prompt them, to make road. 1730
Upon's again.

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

Coriolanus. Saw you Aufidius? 1735

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

Coriolanus. Spoke he of me?

Titus Lartius. He did, my lord. 1740

Coriolanus. How? what?

Titus Lartius. How often he had met you, sword to sword;
That of all things upon the earth he hated
Your person most, that he would pawn his fortunes
To hopeless restitution, so he might 1745
Be call'd your vanquisher.

Coriolanus. At Antium lives he?

Titus Lartius. At Antium.

Coriolanus. I wish I had a cause to seek him there,
To oppose his hatred fully. Welcome home. 1750

[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. 1755

Sicinius Velutus. Pass no further.

Coriolanus. Ha! what is that?

Junius Brutus. It will be dangerous to go on: no further.

Coriolanus. What makes this change?

Menenius Agrippa. The matter? 1760

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

Junius Brutus. Cominius, no.

Coriolanus. Have I had children's voices?

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

Junius Brutus. The people are incensed against him. 1765

Sicinius Velutus. Stop,
Or all will fall in broil.

Coriolanus. Are these your herd?
Must these have voices, that can yield them now
And straight disclaim their tongues? What are 1770
your offices?
You being their mouths, why rule you not their teeth?
Have you not set them on?

Menenius Agrippa. Be calm, be calm.

Coriolanus. It is a purposed thing, and grows by plot, 1775
To curb the will of the nobility:
Suffer't, and live with such as cannot rule
Nor ever will be ruled.

Junius Brutus. Call't not a plot: 1780
The people cry you mock'd them, and of late,
When corn was given them gratis, you repined;
Scandal'd the suppliants for the people, call'd them
Time-pleasers, flatterers, foes to nobleness.

Coriolanus. Why, this was known before.

Junius Brutus. Not to them all. 1785

Coriolanus. Have you inform'd them sithence?

Junius Brutus. How! I inform them!

Coriolanus. You are like to do such business.

Junius Brutus. Not unlike,
Each way, to better yours. 1790

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

Sicinius Velutus. You show too much of that 1795
For which the people stir: if you will pass
To where you are bound, you must inquire your way,

Which you are out of, with a gentler spirit,
Or never be so noble as a consul,
Nor yoke with him for tribune.

Menenius Agrippa. Let's be calm. 1800

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

Coriolanus. Tell me of corn! 1805
This was my speech, and I will speak't again—

Menenius Agrippa. Not now, not now.

First Senator. Not in this heat, sir, now.

Coriolanus. Now, as I live, I will. My nobler friends,
I crave their pardons: 1810

For the mutable, rank-scented many, let them
Regard me as I do not flatter, and
Therein behold themselves: I say again,
In soothing them, we nourish 'gainst our senate
The cockle of rebellion, insolence, sedition, 1815
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. 1820

Menenius Agrippa. Well, no more.

First Senator. No more words, we beseech you.

Coriolanus. How! no more!
As for my country I have shed my blood,
Not fearing outward force, so shall my lungs 1825
Coin words till their decay against those measles,
Which we disdain should tatter us, yet sought
The very way to catch them.

Junius Brutus. You speak o' the people,
As if you were a god to punish, not 1830
A man of their infirmity.

Sicinius Velutus. 'Twere well
We let the people know't.

Menenius Agrippa. What, what? his choler?

Coriolanus. Choler! 1835
Were I as patient as the midnight sleep,
By Jove, 'twould be my mind!

Sicinius Velutus. It is a mind
That shall remain a poison where it is,
Not poison any further. 1840

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

Cominius. 'Twas from the canon.

Coriolanus. 'Shall'!

1845

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,
 Let them have cushions by you. You are plebeians,
 If they be senators: and they are no less,
 When, both your voices blended, the great'st taste
 Most palates theirs. They choose their magistrate,
 And such a one as he, who puts his 'shall,'
 His popular 'shall' against a graver bench
 Than ever frown 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.

1850

1855

1860

1865

Cominius. Well, on to the market-place.

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

1870

Menenius Agrippa. Well, well, no more of that.

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

1875

Junius Brutus. Why, shall the people give
 One that speaks thus their voice?

Coriolanus. I'll give my reasons,

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

1880

1885

1890

1895

Menenius Agrippa. Come, enough.

Junius Brutus. Enough, with over-measure. 1900

Coriolanus. No, take more:

What may be sworn by, both divine and human,
Seal what I end withal! This double worship,
Where one part does disdain with cause, the other
Insult without all reason, where gentry, title, wisdom, 1905

Cannot conclude but by the yea and no
Of general ignorance,—it must omit
Real necessities, and give way the while
To unstable slightness: purpose so barr'd,
it follows, 1910

Nothing is done to purpose. Therefore, beseech you,—
You that will be less fearful than discreet,
That love the fundamental part of state
More than you doubt the change on't, that prefer 1915

A noble life before a long, and wish
To jump a body with a dangerous physic
That's sure of death without it, at once pluck out
The multitudinous tongue; let them not lick
The sweet which is their poison: your dishonour
Mangles true judgment and bereaves the state 1920
Of that integrity which should become't,
Not having the power to do the good it would,
For the in which doth control't.

Junius Brutus. Has said enough.

Sicinius Velutus. Has spoken like a traitor, and shall answer
As traitors do. 1925

Coriolanus. Thou wretch, despite o'erwhelm thee!

What should the people do with these bald tribunes?
On whom depending, their obedience fails
To the greater bench: in a rebellion, 1930
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.

Junius Brutus. Manifest treason! 1935

Sicinius Velutus. This a consul? no.

Junius Brutus. The aediles, ho!

[Enter an AEdile]

Let him be apprehended.

Sicinius Velutus. Go, call the people: 1940

[Exit AEdile]

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. 1945

Coriolanus. Hence, old goat!

Cominius. Aged sir, hands off.

Coriolanus. Hence, rotten thing! or I shall shake thy bones
Out of thy garments. 1950

Sicinius Velutus. Help, ye citizens!

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

Menenius Agrippa. On both sides more respect.

Sicinius Velutus. Here's he that would take from you all your power. 1955

Junius Brutus. Seize him, AEdiles!

Citizens. Down with him! down with him!

[They all bustle about CORIOLANUS, crying]

'Tribunes!' 'Patricians!' 'Citizens!' 'What, ho!'

'Sicinius!' 'Brutus!' 'Coriolanus!' 'Citizens!'

'Peace, peace, peace!' 'Stay, hold, peace!'

1960

Menenius Agrippa. What is about to be? I am out of breath;

Confusion's near; I cannot speak. You, tribunes

To the people! Coriolanus, patience!

Speak, good Sicinius.

1965

Sicinius Velutus. Hear me, people; peace!

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

Sicinius Velutus. You are at point to lose your liberties:

CORIOLANUS would have all from you; CORIOLANUS,

Whom late you have named for consul.

1970

Menenius Agrippa. Fie, fie, fie!

This is the way to kindle, not to quench.

First Senator. To unbuild the city and to lay all flat.

Sicinius Velutus. What is the city but the people?

1975

Citizens. True,

The people are the city.

Junius Brutus. By the consent of all, we were establish'd

The people's magistrates.

Citizens. You so remain.

1980

Menenius Agrippa. And so are like to do.

Cominius. That is the way to lay the city flat;

To bring the roof to the foundation,

And bury all, which yet distinctly ranges,

In heaps and piles of ruin.

1985

Sicinius Velutus. This deserves death.

Junius Brutus. Or let us stand to our authority,

Or let us lose it. We do here pronounce,

Upon the part o' the people, in whose power

We were elected theirs, CORIOLANUS is worthy

Of present death.

1990

Sicinius Velutus. Therefore lay hold of him;

Bear him to the rock Tarpeian, and from thence

Into destruction cast him.

Junius Brutus. AEdiles, seize him!	1995
Citizens. Yield, CORIOLANUS, yield!	
Menenius Agrippa. Hear me one word; Beseech you, tribunes, hear me but a word.	
Aedile. Peace, peace!	
Menenius Agrippa. [<i>To BRUTUS</i>] Be that you seem, truly your country's friend, And temperately proceed to what you would Thus violently redress.	2000
Junius Brutus. Sir, those cold ways, That seem like prudent helps, are very poisonous Where the disease is violent. Lay hands upon him, And bear him to the rock.	2005
Coriolanus. No, I'll die here. [<i>Drawing his sword</i>] There's some among you have beheld me fighting: Come, try upon yourselves what you have seen me.	2010
Menenius Agrippa. Down with that sword! Tribunes, withdraw awhile.	
Junius Brutus. Lay hands upon him.	
Cominius. Help CORIOLANUS, help, You that be noble; help him, young and old!	2015
Citizens. Down with him, down with him! [<i>In this mutiny, the Tribunes, the AEdiles, and the</i> People, are beat in]	
Menenius Agrippa. Go, get you to your house; be gone, away! All will be naught else.	2020
Second Senator. Get you gone.	
Cominius. Stand fast; We have as many friends as enemies.	
Menenius Agrippa. Sham it be put to that?	
First Senator. The gods forbid! I prithee, noble friend, home to thy house; Leave us to cure this cause.	2025
Menenius Agrippa. For 'tis a sore upon us, You cannot tent yourself: be gone, beseech you.	
Cominius. Come, sir, along with us.	2030
Coriolanus. I would they were barbarians—as they are, Though in Rome litter'd—not Romans—as they are not, Though calved i' the porch o' the Capitol—	
Menenius Agrippa. Be gone; Put not your worthy rage into your tongue; One time will owe another.	2035

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

Cominius. I could myself
Take up a brace o' the best of them; yea, the
two tribunes: 2040
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 2045
Like interrupted waters and o'erbear
What they are used to bear.

Menenius Agrippa. Pray you, be gone:
I'll try whether my old wit be in request
With those that have but little: this must be patch'd 2050
With cloth of any colour.

Cominius. Nay, come away.

[Exeunt CORIOLANUS, COMINIUS, and others]

Patrician. This man has marr'd his fortune.

Menenius Agrippa. His nature is too noble for the world: 2055
He would not flatter Neptune for his trident,
Or Jove for's power to thunder. His heart's his mouth:
What his breast forges, that his tongue must vent;
And, being angry, does forget that ever
He heard the name of death. 2060
[A noise within]
Here's goodly work!

Second Patrician. I would they were abed!

Menenius Agrippa. I would they were in Tiber! What the vengeance!
Could he not speak 'em fair? 2065

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

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

Menenius Agrippa. You worthy tribunes,— 2070

Sicinius Velutus. 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. 2075

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

Citizens. He shall, sure on't.

Menenius Agrippa. Sir, sir,— 2080

Sicinius Velutus. Peace!

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

Sicinius Velutus. Sir, how comes't that you
Have help to make this rescue? 2085

Menenius Agrippa. Hear me speak:
As I do know the consul's worthiness,
So can I name his faults,—

Sicinius Velutus. Consul! what consul?

Menenius Agrippa. The consul Coriolanus. 2090

Junius Brutus. He consul!

Citizens. No, no, no, no, no.

Menenius Agrippa. 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 2095
Than so much loss of time.

Sicinius Velutus. Speak briefly then;
For we are peremptory to dispatch
This viperous traitor: to eject him hence 2100
Were but one danger, and to keep him here
Our certain death: therefore it is decreed
He dies to-night.

Menenius Agrippa. Now the good gods forbid
That our renowned Rome, whose gratitude
Towards her deserved children is enroll'd 2105
In Jove's own book, like an unnatural dam
Should now eat up her own!

Sicinius Velutus. He's a disease that must be cut away.

Menenius Agrippa. O, he's a limb that has but a disease;
Mortal, to cut it off; to cure it, easy. 2110
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; 2115
And what is left, to lose it by his country,
Were to us all, that do't and suffer it,
A brand to the end o' the world.

Sicinius Velutus. This is clean kam.

Junius Brutus. Merely awry: when he did love his country,
It honour'd him. 2120

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

Junius Brutus. We'll hear no more.
Pursue him to his house, and pluck him thence: 2125
Lest his infection, being of catching nature,
Spread further.

Menenius Agrippa. One word more, one word.
 This tiger-footed rage, when it shall find
 The harm of unscann'd swiftness, will too late **2130**
 Tie leaden pounds to's heels. Proceed by process;
 Lest parties, as he is beloved, break out,
 And sack great Rome with Romans.

Junius Brutus. If it were so,—

Sicinius Velutus. What do ye talk? **2135**
 Have we not had a taste of his obedience?
 Our aediles smote? ourselves resisted? Come.

Menenius Agrippa. Consider this: he has been bred i' the wars
 Since he could draw a sword, and is ill school'd
 In bolted language; meal and bran together **2140**
 He throws without distinction. Give me leave,
 I'll go to him, and undertake to bring him
 Where he shall answer, by a lawful form,
 In peace, to his utmost peril.

First Senator. Noble tribunes, **2145**
 It is the humane way: the other course
 Will prove too bloody, and the end of it
 Unknown to the beginning.

Sicinius Velutus. Noble Menenius,
 Be you then as the people's officer. **2150**
 Masters, lay down your weapons.

Junius Brutus. Go not home.

Sicinius Velutus. Meet on the market-place. We'll attend you there:
 Where, if you bring not CORIOLANUS, we'll proceed **2155**
 In our first way.

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

First Senator. Pray you, let's to him. **2160**

[Exeunt]



Coriolanus

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Act III, Scene 2

A room in CORIOLANUS'S house.

[Enter CORIOLANUS with Patricians]

Coriolanus. Let them puff all about mine ears, present me
Death on the wheel or at wild horses' heels,
Or pile ten hills on the Tarpeian rock, 2165
That the precipitation might down stretch
Below the beam of sight, yet will I still
Be thus to them.

Patrician. You do the nobler.

Coriolanus. I muse my mother 2170
Does not approve me further, who was wont
To call them woollen vassals, things created
To buy and sell with groats, to show bare heads
In congregations, to yawn, be still and wonder,
When one but of my ordinance stood up 2175
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 2180
The man I am.

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

Coriolanus. Let go. 2185

Volumnia. You might have been enough the man you are,
With striving less to be so; lesser had been
The thwartings of your dispositions, if
You had not show'd them how ye were disposed 2190
Ere they lack'd power to cross you.

Coriolanus. Let them hang.

Patrician. Ay, and burn too.

[Enter MENENIUS and Senators]

Menenius Agrippa. Come, come, you have been too rough, something
too rough; 2195
You must return and mend it.

- First Senator.** There's no remedy;
Unless, by not so doing, our good city
Cleave in the midst, and perish.
- Volumnia.** Pray, be counsell'd: 2200
I have a heart as little apt as yours,
But yet a brain that leads my use of anger
To better vantage.
- Menenius Agrippa.** Well said, noble woman?
Before he should thus stoop to the herd, but that 2205
The violent fit o' the time craves it as physic
For the whole state, I would put mine armour on,
Which I can scarcely bear.
- Coriolanus.** What must I do?
- Menenius Agrippa.** Return to the tribunes. 2210
- Coriolanus.** Well, what then? what then?
- Menenius Agrippa.** Repent what you have spoke.
- Coriolanus.** For them! I cannot do it to the gods;
Must I then do't to them?
- Volumnia.** You are too absolute; 2215
Though therein you can never be too noble,
But when extremities speak. I have heard you say,
Honour and policy, like unsever'd friends,
I' the war do grow together: grant that, and tell me,
In peace what each of them by the other lose, 2220
That they combine not there.
- Coriolanus.** Tush, tush!
- Menenius Agrippa.** A good demand.
- Volumnia.** If it be honour in your wars to seem 2225
The same you are not, which, for your best ends,
You adopt your policy, how is it less or worse,
That it shall hold companionship in peace
With honour, as in war, since that to both
It stands in like request?
- Coriolanus.** Why force you this? 2230
- Volumnia.** Because that now it lies you on to speak
To the people; not by your own instruction,
Nor by the matter which your heart prompts you,
But with such words that are but rooted in 2235
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 2240
The hazard of much blood.
I would dissemble with my nature where
My fortunes and my friends at stake required
I should do so in honour: I am in this,
Your wife, your son, these senators, the nobles;
And you will rather show our general louts 2245
How you can frown than spend a fawn upon 'em,

For the inheritance of their loves and safeguard
Of what that want might ruin.

Menenius Agrippa. Noble lady!

Come, go with us; speak fair: you may salve so, 2250
Not what is dangerous present, but the loss
Of what is past.

Volumnia. I prithee now, my son,

Go to them, with this bonnet in thy hand;
And thus far having stretch'd it—here be with them— 2255

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 2260

That will not hold the handling: or say to them,
Thou art their soldier, and being bred in broils
Hast not the soft way which, thou dost confess,
Were fit for thee to use as they to claim,
In asking their good loves, but thou wilt frame 2265
Thyself, forsooth, hereafter theirs, so far
As thou hast power and person.

Menenius Agrippa. This but done,

Even as she speaks, why, their hearts were yours;
For they have pardons, being ask'd, as free 2270
As words to little purpose.

Volumnia. Prithee now,

Go, and be ruled: although I know thou hadst rather
Follow thine enemy in a fiery gulf
Than flatter him in a bower. Here is Cominius. 2275

[Enter COMINIUS]

Cominius. I have been i' the market-place; and, sir, 'tis fit

You make strong party, or defend yourself
By calmness or by absence: all's in anger.

Menenius Agrippa. Only fair speech. 2280

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

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

Coriolanus. Must I go show them my unbarbed sconce? 2285

Must I with base tongue give my noble heart
A lie that it must bear? Well, I will do't:
Yet, were there but this single plot to lose,
This mould of CORIOLANUS, they to dust should grind it
And throw't against the wind. To the market-place! 2290
You have put me now to such a part which never
I shall discharge to the life.

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

Volumnia. I prithee now, sweet son, as thou hast said

My praises made thee first a soldier, so, 2295
To have my praise for this, perform a part
Thou hast not done before.

Coriolanus. Well, I must do't:

Away, my disposition, and possess me
 Some harlot's spirit! my throat of war be turn'd, 2300
 Which quired with my drum, into a pipe
 Small as an eunuch, or the virgin voice
 That babies lulls asleep! the smiles of knaves
 Tent in my cheeks, and schoolboys' tears take up
 The glasses of my sight! a beggar's tongue 2305
 Make motion through my lips, and my arm'd knees,
 Who bow'd but in my stirrup, bend like his
 That hath received an alms! I will not do't,
 Lest I surcease to honour mine own truth
 And by my body's action teach my mind 2310
 A most inherent baseness.

Volumnia. At thy choice, then:

To beg of thee, it is my more dishonour
 Than thou of them. Come all to ruin; let
 Thy mother rather feel thy pride than fear 2315
 Thy dangerous stoutness, for I mock at death
 With as big heart as thou. Do as thou list
 Thy valiantness was mine, thou suck'dst it from me,
 But owe thy pride thyself.

Coriolanus. Pray, be content: 2320

Mother, I am going to the market-place;
 Chide me no more. I'll mountebank their loves,
 Cog their hearts from them, and come home beloved
 Of all the trades in Rome. Look, I am going:
 Commend me to my wife. I'll return consul; 2325
 Or never trust to what my tongue can do
 I' the way of flattery further.

Volumnia. Do your will.

[Exit]

Cominius. Away! the tribunes do attend you: arm yourself 2330
 To answer mildly; for they are prepared
 With accusations, as I hear, more strong
 Than are upon you yet.

Coriolanus. The word is 'mildly.' Pray you, let us go: 2335
 Let them accuse me by invention, I
 Will answer in mine honour.

Menenius Agrippa. Ay, but mildly.

Coriolanus. Well, mildly be it then. Mildly!

[Exeunt]



Coriolanus

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Act III, Scene 3

The same. The Forum.

[Enter SICINIUS and BRUTUS]

Junius Brutus. In this point charge him home, that he affects
Tyrannical power: if he evade us there,
Enforce him with his envy to the people,
And that the spoil got on the Antiates
Was ne'er distributed. 2345
[Enter an AEdile]
What, will he come?

Aedile. He's coming.

Junius Brutus. How accompanied?

Aedile. With old Menenius, and those senators 2350
That always favour'd him.

Sicinius Velutus. Have you a catalogue
Of all the voices that we have procured
Set down by the poll?

Aedile. I have; 'tis ready. 2355

Sicinius Velutus. Have you collected them by tribes?

Aedile. I have.

Sicinius Velutus. Assemble presently the people hither;
And when they bear me say 'It shall be so
I' the right and strength o' the commons,' be it either 2360
For death, for fine, or banishment, then let them
If I say fine, cry 'Fine;' if death, cry 'Death.'
Insisting on the old prerogative
And power i' the truth o' the cause.

Aedile. I shall inform them. 2365

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

Aedile. Very well. 2370

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

Junius Brutus. Go about it.

[Exit AEdile]

Put him to choler straight: he hath been used 2375

Ever to conquer, and to have his worth

Of contradiction: being once chafed, he cannot

Be rein'd again to temperance; then he speaks

What's in his heart; and that is there which looks

With us to break his neck. 2380

Sicinius Velutus. Well, here he comes.

*[Enter CORIOLANUS, MENENIUS, and COMINIUS,]
with Senators and Patricians]*

Menenius Agrippa. Calmly, I do beseech you.

Coriolanus. Ay, as an ostler, that for the poorest piece 2385

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! 2390

First Senator. Amen, amen.

Menenius Agrippa. A noble wish.

[Re-enter AEdile, with Citizens]

Sicinius Velutus. Draw near, ye people.

Aedile. List to your tribunes. Audience: peace, I say! 2395

Coriolanus. First, hear me speak.

Both Tribunes. Well, say. Peace, ho!

Coriolanus. Shall I be charged no further than this present?

Must all determine here?

Sicinius Velutus. I do demand, 2400

If you submit you to the people's voices,

Allow their officers and are content

To suffer lawful censure for such faults

As shall be proved upon you?

Coriolanus. I am content. 2405

Menenius Agrippa. Lo, citizens, he says he is content:

The warlike service he has done, consider; think

Upon the wounds his body bears, which show

Like graves i' the holy churchyard.

Coriolanus. Scratches with briers, 2410

Scars to move laughter only.

Menenius Agrippa. 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, 2415

But, as I say, such as become a soldier,
Rather than envy you.

Cominius. Well, well, no more.

Coriolanus. What is the matter
That being pass'd for consul with full voice, 2420
I am so dishonour'd that the very hour
You take it off again?

Sicinius Velutus. Answer to us.

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

Sicinius Velutus. We charge you, that you have contrived to take 2425
From Rome all season'd office and to wind
Yourself into a power tyrannical;
For which you are a traitor to the people.

Coriolanus. How! traitor!

Menenius Agrippa. Nay, temperately; your promise. 2430

Coriolanus. The fires i' the lowest hell fold-in the people!
Call me their traitor! Thou injurious tribune!
Within thine eyes sat twenty thousand deaths,
In thy hand clutch'd as many millions, in 2435
Thy lying tongue both numbers, I would say
'Thou liest' unto thee with a voice as free
As I do pray the gods.

Sicinius Velutus. Mark you this, people?

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

Sicinius Velutus. Peace! 2440
We need not put new matter to his charge:
What you have seen him do and heard him speak,
Beating your officers, cursing yourselves,
Opposing laws with strokes and here defying
Those whose great power must try him; even this, 2445
So criminal and in such capital kind,
Deserves the extremest death.

Junius Brutus. But since he hath
Served well for Rome,—

Coriolanus. What do you prate of service? 2450

Junius Brutus. I talk of that, that know it.

Coriolanus. You?

Menenius Agrippa. Is this the promise that you made your mother?

Cominius. Know, I pray you,—

Coriolanus. I know no further: 2455
Let them pronounce the steep Tarpeian death,
Vagabond exile, raying, pent to linger
But with a grain a day, I would not buy
Their mercy at the price of one fair word;

2460

Nor cheque my courage for what they can give,
To have't with saying 'Good morrow.'

Sicinius Velutus. 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 2465
Given hostile strokes, and that not in the presence
Of dreaded justice, but on the ministers
That do distribute it; in the name o' the people
And in the power of us the tribunes, we,
Even from this instant, banish him our city, 2470
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: 2475
He's banish'd, and it shall be so.

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

Sicinius Velutus. He's sentenced; no more hearing.

Cominius. Let me speak:

I have been consul, and can show for Rome 2480
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 2485
Speak that,—

Sicinius Velutus. We know your drift: speak what?

Junius Brutus. There's no more to be said, but he is banish'd,
As enemy to the people and his country:
It shall be so. 2490

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

Coriolanus. You common cry of curs! whose breath I hate

As reek o' the rotten fens, whose loves I prize
As the dead carcasses of unburied men
That do corrupt my air, I banish you; 2495
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 2500
Your ignorance, which finds not till it feels,
Making not reservation of yourselves,
Still your own foes, deliver you as most
Abated captives to some nation
That won you without blows! Despising, 2505
For you, the city, thus I turn my back:
There is a world elsewhere.
[*Exeunt CORIOLANUS, COMINIUS, MENENIUS, Senators,*
and Patricians]

Aedile. The people's enemy is gone, is gone! 2510

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

[Shouting, and throwing up their caps]

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

2515

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

[Exeunt]

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