

# Coriolanus

## 3.2

*Enter Coriolanus, with Nobles*

**CORIOLANUS**

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

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*Enter Volumnia*

**A PATRICIAN** You do the nobler.

**CORIOLANUS**

I muse my mother

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

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**VOLUMNIA** O, sir, sir, sir, 15

I would have had you put your power well on  
Before you had worn it out.

**CORIOLANUS**

Let go.

**VOLUMNIA**

You might have been enough the man you are  
With striving less to be so. Lesser had been  
The taxings of your dispositions if  
You had not showed them how ye were disposed  
Ere they lacked power to cross you.

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**CORIOLANUS**

Let them hang.

**VOLUMNIA** Ay, and burn too.

*Enter Menenius, with the Senators*

**MENENIUS** *(to Coriolanus)*

Come, come, you have been too rough, something too  
rough.

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A good

A good

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Not by your own instruction, nor by th' matter  
 Which your heart prompts you, but with such words 55  
 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 60  
 To your fortune and 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; 65  
 And you will rather show our general louts  
 How you can frown than spend a fawn upon 'em  
 For the inheritance of their loves and safeguard  
 Of what that want might ruin.

**MENENIUS**

Noble lady!

(To Coriolanus) Come, go with us, speak fair. You may  
 salve so, 70  
 Not what is dangerous present, but the loss  
 Of what is past.

**VOLUMNIA** I prithee now, my son,

*[She takes his bonnet]*

Go to them with this bonnet in thy hand,  
 And thus far having stretched it±±here be with  
 them±±

Thy knee bussing the stones±±for in such business 75  
 Action is eloquence, and the eyes of th' ignorant  
 More learneÁd than the ears±±waving thy head,  
 With 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 85  
 As thou hast power and person.

**MENENIUS** (to Coriolanus) This but done

Even as she speaks, why, their hearts were yours;

For they have pardons, being asked, as free  
As words to little purpose.

**VOLUMNIA** (to *Coriolanus*) Prithee now,  
Go, and be ruled, 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.

**COMINIUS**

I have been i'th' market-place; and, sir, 'tis fit  
You make strong party, or defend yourself  
By calmness or by absence. All's in anger. 95

**MENENIUS**

Only fair speech.

**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 unbarbeÁd 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 th' market-place.  
You have put me now to such a part which never 105  
I shall discharge to th' 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,  
To have my praise for this, perform a part  
Thou hast not done before.

**CORIOLANUS**

Well, I must do't. 110

Away, my disposition; and possess me  
Some harlot's spirit! My throat of war be turned,  
Which choired with my drum, into a pipe  
Small as an eunuch or the virgin voice  
That babies lull asleep! The smiles of knaves 115

Tent in my cheeks, and schoolboys' tears take up  
The glasses of my sight! A beggar's tongue  
Make motion through my lips, and my armed knees,  
Who bowed but in my stirrup, bend like his  
That hath received 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.

**VOLUMNIA** At thy choice, then.  
To beg of thee it is my more dishonour  
Than thou of them. Come all to ruin. Let 125  
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 sucked'st it from me,  
But owe thy pride thyself.

**CORIOLANUS** 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 beloved  
Of all the trades in Rome. Look, I am going.  
Commend me to my wife. I'll return consul, 135  
Or never trust to what my tongue can do  
I'th' way of flattery further.

**VOLUMNIA** Do your will.  
*Exit Volumnia*

**COMINIUS**  
Away! The tribunes do attend you. Arm yourself  
To answer mildly, for they are prepared  
With accusations, as I hear, more strong 140  
Than are upon you yet.

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

**MENENIUS** Ay, but mildly. 145

**CORIOLANUS** Well, mildly be it, then±±mildly.  
*Exeunt*