

Coriolanus

5.1

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

MENENIUS

No, I'll not go. You hear what he hath said
Which was sometime his general, who loved him
In a most dear particular. He called me father,
But what o' that? *(To the tribunes)* Go, you that
banished him.

A mile before his tent fall down, and knee 5
The way into his mercy. Nay, if he coyed
To hear Cominius speak, I'll keep at home.

COMINIUS

He would not seem to know me.

MENENIUS *(to the tribunes)* Do you hear?

COMINIUS

Yet one time he did call me by my name.
I urged our old acquaintance and the drops 10
That we have bled together. 'Coriolanus'
He would not answer to, forbade all names.
He was a kind of nothing, titleless,
Till he had forged himself a name o'th' fire
Of burning Rome.

MENENIUS *(to the tribunes)* Why, so! You have made good work. 15
A pair of tribunes that have wracked fair Rome
To make coals cheap±±a noble memory!

COMINIUS

I minded him how royal 'twas to pardon
When it was less expected. He replied
It was a bare petition of a state 20
To one whom they had punished.

MENENIUS

Very well.

Could he say less?

COMINIUS

I offered to awaken his regard
For's private friends. His answer to me was
He could not stay to pick them in a pile 25

Of noisome, musty chaff. He said 'twas folly,
For one poor grain or two, to leave unburnt
And still to nose th'offence.

MENENIUS

For one poor grain or two?

I am one of those. His mother, wife, his child,
And this brave fellow too±±we are the grains. 30

(To the tribunes) You are the musty chaff, and you are
smelt

Above the moon. We must be burnt for you.

SICINIUS

Nay, pray be patient. If you refuse your aid
In this so never-needed help, yet do not
Upbraid's with our distress. But sure, if you 35
Would be your country's pleader, your good tongue,
More than the instant army we can make,
Might stop our countryman.

MENENIUS

No, I'll not meddle.

SICINIUS

Pray you go to him.

MENENIUS

What should I do?

BRUTUS

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

MENENIUS

Well, and say that Martius return me,
As Cominius is returned, unheard±±what then?
But as a discontented friend, grief-shot
With his unkindness? Say't be so?

SICINIUS

Yet your good will 45

Must have that thanks from Rome after the measure
As you intended well.

MENENIUS

I'll undertake't.

I think he'll hear me. Yet to bite his lip
And `hmmh' at good Cominius much unhearts me.
He was not taken well, he had not dined. 50
The veins unfilled, our blood is cold, and then
We pout upon the morning, are unapt
To give or to forgive; but when we have stuffed
These pipes and these conveyances of our blood
With wine and feeding, we have suppler souls 55

Than in our priest-like fasts. Therefore I'll watch him
Till he be dieted to my request,
And then I'll set upon him.

BRUTUS

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

MENENIUS

Good faith, I'll prove him. 60

Speed how it will, I shall ere long have knowledge
Of my success.

Exit

COMINIUS

He'll never hear him.

SICINIUS

Not?

COMINIUS

I tell you, he does sit in gold, his eye
Red as 'twould burn Rome, and his injury
The jailer to his pity. I kneeled before him; 65
'Twas very faintly he said 'Rise', dismissed me
Thus with his speechless hand. What he would do
He sent in writing after me, what he would not,
Bound with an oath to hold to his conditions.
So that all hope is vain unless his noble mother 70
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