

Coriolanus

4.1

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

CORIO LANUS

Come, leave your tears. A brief farewell. The beast
With many heads butts me away. Nay, mother,
Where is your ancient courage? You were used
To say extremities was the trier of spirits,
That common chances common men could bear, 5
That when the sea was calm all boats alike
Showed mastership in floating; fortune's blows
When most struck home, being gentle wounded craves
A noble cunning. You were used to load me
With precepts that would make invincible 10
The heart that conned them.

VIRGILIA O heavens, O heavens!

CORIO LANUS Nay, I prithee, woman±±

VOLUMNIA

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

CORIO LANUS What, what, what? 15

I shall be loved when I am lacked. Nay, mother,
Resume that spirit when you were wont to say,
If you had been the wife of Hercules
Six of his labours you'd have done, and saved
Your husband so much sweat. Cominius, 20
Droop not. Adieu. Farewell, my wife, my mother.
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 25
Heart-hard'ning 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, 30
Like to a lonely dragon that his fen

Makes feared and talked of more than seen, your son
Will or exceed the common or be caught
With cautelous baits and practice.

VOLUMNIA

My first son,

Whither will thou go? Take good Cominius
With thee a while. Determine on some course
More than a wild exposure to each chance
That starts i'th' way before thee.

35

[VIRGILIA]

O the gods!

COMINIUS

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
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'th' absence of the needer.

40

CORIOLANUS

Fare ye well.

45

Thou hast years upon thee, and thou art too full
Of the wars' surfeits to go rove with one
That's yet unbruised. 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.
While I remain above the ground you shall
Hear from me still, and never of me aught
But what is like me formerly.

50

MENENIUS

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'd with thee every foot.

55

CORIOLANUS

Give me thy hand. Come.

Exeunt