

# Coriolanus

## 2.2

*Enter two Officers, to lay cushions, as it were in the Capitol*

**FIRST OFFICER** Come, come, they are almost here. How many stand for consulships?

**SECOND OFFICER** Three, they say, but 'tis thought of every one Coriolanus will carry it.

**FIRST OFFICER** That's a brave fellow, but he's vengeance 5 proud and loves not the common people.

**SECOND OFFICER** Faith, there hath been many great men that have flattered the people who ne'er loved them; and there be many that they have loved they know not wherefore, so that if they love they know not why, 10 they hate upon no better a ground. Therefore for Coriolanus neither to care whether they love or hate him manifests the true knowledge he has in their disposition, and out of his noble carelessness lets them plainly see't. 15

**FIRST OFFICER** If he did not care whether he had their love or no he waved indifferently 'twixt doing them neither good nor harm; but he seeks their hate with greater devotion than they can render it him, and leaves nothing undone that may fully discover him 20 their opposite. Now to seem to affect the malice and displeasure of the people is as bad as that which he dislikes, to flatter them for their love.

**SECOND OFFICER** He hath deserved worthily of his country, and his assent is not by such easy degrees as those 25 who, having been supple and courteous to the people, bonneted, without any further deed to have them at all into their estimation and report. But he hath so planted his honours in their eyes and his actions in their hearts that for their tongues to be silent and not 30 confess so much were a kind of ingrateful injury. To report otherwise were a malice that, giving itself the lie, would pluck reproof and rebuke from every ear that heard it.

**FIRST OFFICER** No more of him. He's a worthy man. Make way, they are coming. 35

*A sennet. Enter the Patricians, and Sicinius and Brutus, the tribunes of the people, lictors before them; Coriolanus, Menenius, Cominius the consul. [The Patricians take their places and sit.] Sicinius and Brutus take their places by themselves. Coriolanus stands*

**MENENIUS**

Having determined of the Volsces, and  
To send for Titus Lartius, it remains  
As the main point of this our after-meeting  
To gratify his noble service that 40  
Hath thus stood for his country. Therefore please you,  
Most reverend and grave elders, to desire  
The present consul and last general  
In our well-found successes to report  
A little of that worthy work performed 45  
By Martius Caius Coriolanus, whom  
We met here both to thank and to remember  
With honours like himself.

*[Coriolanus sits]*

**FIRST SENATOR** Speak, good Cominius.  
Leave nothing out for length, and make us think  
Rather our state's defective for requital 50  
Than we to stretch it out.  
(*To the tribunes*) Masters o'th' people,  
We do request your kindest ears and, after,  
Your loving motion toward the common body  
To yield what passes here.

**SICINIUS** We are convented  
Upon a pleasing treaty, and have hearts 55  
Inclinable to honour and advance  
The theme of our assembly.

**BRUTUS** Which the rather  
We shall be blessed to do if he remember  
A kinder value of the people than  
He hath hereto prized them at.

**MENENIUS** That's off, that's off. 60  
I would you rather had been silent. Please you

To hear Cominius speak?

**BRUTUS** Most willingly,  
But yet my caution was more pertinent  
Than the rebuke you give it.

**MENENIUS** He loves your people,  
But tie him not to be their bedfellow. 65  
Worthy Cominius, speak.

*Coriolanus rises and offers to go away*  
(To Coriolanus) Nay, keep your place.

**[FIRST] SENATOR** Sit, Coriolanus. Never shame to hear  
What you have nobly done.

**CORIOLANUS** Your honours' pardon,  
I had rather have my wounds to heal again  
Than hear say how I got them.

**BRUTUS** Sir, I hope 70  
My words disbenched you not?

**CORIOLANUS** No, sir, yet oft  
When blows have made me stay I fled from words.  
You soothed not, therefore hurt not; but your people,  
I love them as they weigh±±

**MENENIUS** Pray now, sit down.

**CORIOLANUS**  
I had rather have one scratch my head i'th' sun 75  
When the alarum were struck than idly sit  
To hear my nothings monstered.

*Exit*

**MENENIUS** Masters of the people,  
Your multiplying spawn how can he flatter±±  
That's thousand to one good one±±when you now see  
He had rather venture all his limbs for honour 80  
Than one on's ears to hear it? Proceed, Cominius.

**COMINIUS**  
I shall lack voice; the deeds of Coriolanus  
Should not be uttered feebly. It is held  
That valour is the chiefest virtue, and  
Most dignifies the haver. If it be, 85  
The man I speak of cannot in the world  
Be singly counterpoised. At sixteen years,  
When Tarquin made a head for Rome, he fought  
Beyond the mark of others. Our then dictator,

Whom with all praise I point at, saw him fight 90  
 When with his Amazonian chin he drove  
 The bristled lips before him. He bestrid  
 An o'erpressed Roman, and, i'th' consul's view,  
 Slew three opposers. Tarquin's self he met,  
 And struck him on his knee. In that day's feats, 95  
 When he might act the woman in the scene,  
 He proved best man i'th' field, and for his meed  
 Was brow-bound with the oak. His pupil age  
 Man-entered thus, he waxeÁd like a sea,  
 And in the brunt of seventeen battles since 100  
 He lurched all swords of the garland. For this last  
 Before and in Corioles, let me say  
 I cannot speak him home. He stopped the fliers,  
 And by his rare example made the coward  
 Turn terror into sport. As weeds before 105  
 A vessel under sail, so men obeyed  
 And fell below his stem. His sword, death's stamp,  
 Where it did mark, it took. From face to foot  
 He was a thing of blood, whose every motion  
 Was timed with dying cries. Alone he entered 110  
 The mortal gate of th' city, which he, painted  
 With shunless destiny, aidless came off,  
 And with a sudden reinforcement struck  
 Corioles like a planet. Now all's his.  
 When by and by the din of war gan pierce 115  
 His ready sense, then straight his doubled spirit  
 Requickened what in flesh was fatigate,  
 And to the battle came he, where he did  
 Run reeking o'er the lives of men as if  
 'Twere a perpetual spoil; and till we called 120  
 Both field and city ours he never stood  
 To ease his breast with panting.

**MENENIUS**

Worthy man.

**[FIRST] SENATOR**

He cannot but with measure fit the honours  
 Which we devise him.

**COMINIUS**

Our spoils he kicked at,  
 And looked upon things precious as they were 125  
 The common muck of the world. He covets less

Than misery itself would give, rewards  
His deeds with doing them, and is content  
To spend the time to end it.

**MENENIUS** He's right noble.

Let him be called for. 130

**[FIRST] SENATOR** Call Coriolanus.

**OFFICER** He doth appear.

*Enter Coriolanus*

**MENENIUS**

The senate, Coriolanus, are well pleased  
To make thee consul.

**CORIOLANUS** I do owe them still  
My life and services.

**MENENIUS** It then remains 135  
That you do speak to the people.

**CORIOLANUS** I do beseech you,  
Let me o'erleap that custom, for I cannot  
Put on the gown, stand naked, and entreat them  
For my wounds' sake to give their suffrage.  
Please you that I may pass this doing.

**SICINIUS** Sir, the people

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Must have their voices, neither will they bate  
One jot of ceremony.

**MENENIUS** *(to Coriolanus)* Put them not to't.  
Pray you, go fit you to the custom and  
Take to you, as your predecessors have,  
Your honour with your form.

**CORIOLANUS** It is a part 145  
That I shall blush in acting, and might well  
Be taken from the people.

**BRUTUS** *(to Sicinius)* Mark you that?

**CORIOLANUS**  
To brag unto them `Thus I did, and thus',  
Show them th'unaching scars, which I should hide,  
As if I had received them for the hire 150  
Of their breath only!

**MENENIUS** Do not stand upon't.±±  
We recommend to you, tribunes of the people,  
Our purpose to them; and to our noble consul

Wish we all joy and honour.

**SENATORS**

To Coriolanus come all joy and honour!

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*A flourish of cornetts, then exeunt all but  
Sicinius and Brutus*

**BRUTUS**

You see how he intends to use the people.

**SICINIUS**

May they perceive's intent! He will require them  
As if he did condemn what he requested  
Should be in them to give.

**BRUTUS**

Come, we'll inform them

Of our proceedings here. On th' market-place

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I know they do attend us.

*Exeunt*