

Coriolanus

5.4

Enter Menenius and Sicinius

MENENIUS See you yon coign o'th' Capitol, yon corner-stone?

SICINIUS Why, what of that?

MENENIUS If it be possible for you to displace it with your little finger, there is some hope the ladies of Rome, especially his mother, may prevail with him. But I say there is no hope in't, our throats are sentenced and stay upon execution. 5

SICINIUS Is't possible that so short a time can alter the condition of a man? 10

MENENIUS There is differency between a grub and a butterfly, yet your butterfly was a grub. This Martius is grown from man to dragon. He has wings, he's more than a creeping thing.

SICINIUS He loved his mother dearly. 15

MENENIUS So did he me, and he no more remembers his mother now than an eight-year old horse. The tartness of his face sours ripe grapes. When he walks, he moves like an engine, and the ground shrinks before his treading. He is able to pierce a corslet with his eye, talks like a knell, and his `hnh!' is a battery. He sits in his state as a thing made for Alexander. What he bids be done is finished with his bidding. He wants nothing of a god but eternity and a heaven to throne in. 20 25

SICINIUS Yes: mercy, if you report him truly.

MENENIUS I paint him in the character. Mark what mercy his mother shall bring from him. There is no more mercy in him than there is milk in a male tiger. That shall our poor city find; and all this is 'long of you. 30

SICINIUS The gods be good unto us!

MENENIUS No, in such a case the gods will not be good unto us. When we banished him we respected not them, and, he returning to break our necks, they respect not us. 35

Enter a Messenger

MESSENGER *(to Sicinius)*

Sir, if you'd save your life, fly to your house.
The plebeians have got your fellow tribune
And hale him up and down, all swearing if
The Roman ladies bring not comfort home
They'll give him death by inches.

Enter another Messenger

SICINIUS

What's the news? 40

SECOND MESSENGER

Good news, good news. The ladies have prevailed,
The Volscians are dislodged, and Martius gone.
A merrier day did never yet greet Rome,
No, not th'expulsion of the Tarquins.

SICINIUS

Friend,

Art thou certain this is true? Is't most certain? 45

SECOND MESSENGER

As certain as I know the sun is fire.
Where have you lurked that you make doubt of it?
Ne'er through an arch so hurried the blown tide
As the recomforted through th' gates.

Trumpets, hautboys, drums, beat all together

Why, hark you,

The trumpets, sackbuts, psalteries, and fifes, 50
Tabors and cymbals and the shouting Romans
Make the sun dance.

A shout within

Hark you!

MENENIUS

This is good news.

I will go meet the ladies. This Volumnia
Is worth of consuls, senators, patricians,
A city full; of tribunes such as you, 55
A sea and land full. You have prayed well today.
This morning for ten thousand of your throats
I'd not have given a doit.

Music sounds still with the shouts

Hark how they

joy!

SICINIUS *(to the Messenger)*

First, the gods bless you for your tidings. Next,

[Giving money] Accept my thankfulness.

60

SECOND MESSENGER

Sir, we have all great cause to give great thanks.

SICINIUS

They are near the city.

SECOND MESSENGER Almost at point to enter.

SICINIUS We'll meet them, and help the joy.

Exeunt