

Coriolanus

1.7

Enter Cominius, as it were in retire, with soldiers

COMINIUS

Breathe you, my friends. Well fought. We are come off
Like Romans, neither foolish in our stands
Nor cowardly in retire. Believe me, sirs,
We shall be charged again. Whiles we have struck,
By interims and conveying gusts we have heard
The charges of our friends. The Roman gods
Lead their successes as we wish our own,
That both our powers, with smiling fronts
 encount'ring,
May give you thankful sacrifice!

Enter a Messenger

5

Thy

news?

MESSENGER

The citizens of Corioles have issued,
And given to Lartius and to Martius battle.
I saw our party to their trenches driven,
And then I came away.

10

COMINIUS

Though thou speak'st truth,
Methinks thou speak'st not well. How long is't since?

MESSENGER

Above an hour, my lord.

15

COMINIUS

'Tis not a mile; briefly we heard their drums.
How couldst thou in a mile confound an hour,
And bring thy news so late?

MESSENGER

Spies of the Volsces

Held me in chase, that I was forced to wheel
Three or four miles about; else had I, sir,
Half an hour since brought my report.

20

[Exit]

Enter Martius, bloody

COMINIUS

Who's yonder,

That does appear as he were flayed? O gods!
He has the stamp of Martius, and I have

Before-time seen him thus.

MARTIUS Come I too late?

COMINIUS

The shepherd knows not thunder from a tabor 25
More than I know the sound of Martius' tongue
From every meaner man.

MARTIUS Come I too late?

COMINIUS

Ay, if you come not in the blood of others,
But mantled in your own.

MARTIUS O, let me clip ye
In arms as sound as when I wooed, in heart 30
As merry as when our nuptial day was done,
And tapers burnt to bedward!

[They embrace]

COMINIUS

Flower of warriors! How is't with Titus Lartius?

MARTIUS

As with a man busied about decrees,
Condemning some to death and some to exile, 35
Ransoming him or pitying, threat'ning th'other;
Holding Corioles in the name of Rome
Even like a fawning greyhound in the leash,
To let him slip at will.

COMINIUS Where is that slave
Which told me they had beat you to your trenches? 40
Where is he? Call him hither.

MARTIUS Let him alone.
He did inform the truth. But for our gentlemen,
The common file±±a plague±±tribunes for them?±±
The mouse ne'er shunned the cat as they did budge
From rascals worse than they.

COMINIUS But how prevailed you? 45

MARTIUS

Will the time serve to tell? I do not think.
Where is the enemy? Are you lords o'th' field?
If not, why cease you till you are so?

COMINIUS

Martius, we have at disadvantage fought,
And did retire to win our purpose. 50

MARTIUS

How lies their battle? Know you on which side
They have placed their men of trust?

COMINIUS

As I guess, Martius,

Their bands i'th' vanguard are the Antiates,
Of their best trust; o'er them Aufidius,
Their very heart of hope.

MARTIUS

I do beseech you

55

By all the battles wherein we have fought,
By th' blood we have shed together, by th' vows we
have made

To endure friends, that you directly set me
Against Aufidius and his Antiates,

And that you not delay the present, but,

60

Filling the air with swords advanced and darts,
We prove this very hour.

COMINIUS

Though I could wish

You were conducted to a gentle bath

And balms applied to you, yet dare I never

Deny your asking. Take your choice of those

65

That best can aid your action.

MARTIUS

Those are they

That most are willing. If any such be here±±

As it were sin to doubt±±that love this painting

Wherein you see me smeared; if any fear

Lesser his person than an ill report;

70

If any think brave death outweighs bad life,

And that his country's dearer than himself,

Let him alone, or so many so minded,

He waves his sword

Wave thus to express his disposition,

And follow Martius.

75

They all shout and wave their swords, [then some]

take him up in their arms and they cast up their

caps

O' me alone, make you a sword of me?

If these shows be not outward, which of you

But is four Volscies? None of you but is

Able to bear against the great Aufidius

A shield as hard as his. A certain number±±

80

Though thanks to all±±must I select from all.

The rest shall bear the business in some other fight
As cause will be obeyed. Please you to march,
And I shall quickly draw out my command,
Which men are best inclined.

COMINIUS

March on, my fellows.

85

Make good this ostentation, and you shall
Divide in all with us.

Exeunt marching