

Coriolanus abbreviated

Act 3, Scene 1

Anger

Situation: With a bare majority of the vote, the people select Coriolanus as their consul. Brutus, a tribune, says to Coriolanus “You speak o’ th’ people as if you were a god to punish, not a man of their infirmity.” Sicinius, the other tribune, says of him “It is a mind that shall remain a poison where it is.”

CORIOLANUS: Shall remain! Mark you his absolute “shall”?

COMINIUS: Was out of order.

CORIOLANUS: “Shall”? O good but most unwise patricians!

Coriolanus to Senators, No. 1

Why, you negligent senators, have you
Allowed this multi-headed beast here to
Choose a consul through a peremptory
“Shall,” being but the monster’s horn, to say
He’ll turn the stream in your ditch; what should be
Your current, to his? If power his, lay
Down your pride; if not, be less mild;
Let not the Senate House be so defiled.
When they choose their magistrate, his “shall,” an’
Their support, shall change all, making the brow
Of each angry man here more wrinkled than
E’er found in Greece. My soul aches to think how
Soon confusion may enter ‘twixt each team
When neither authority is supreme.

COMINIUS: Well, on to th’ marketplace.

CORIOLANUS: Whoever gave that counsel, to give forth the corn o’ th’ storehouse gratis.

MENENIUS: Well, well, no more of that.