

Coriolanus abbreviated

Act 5, Scene 3.1

Mother to Son

Situation: Menenius had entered the Volscian camp on the outskirts of Rome, his objective being to talk with Coriolanus, but is rebuffed when he confronts Coriolanus, Coriolanus rudely saying “Away! Be gone.” But Coriolanus’ mother Volumnia and his wife Virgilia and their son soon enter. With Aufidius at his side, he listens to the women respectfully.

VIRGILIA: My lord and husband!

CORIOLANUS: These eyes are not the same I wore in Rome.

VOLUMNIA: Your knee, sirrah.

CORIOLANUS: That’s my brave boy!

VOLUMNIA: Even he, your wife, this lady, and myself are suitors to you.

CORIOLANUS: Do not bid me dismiss my soldiers, or capitulate again with Rome’s mechanics.

VOLUMNIA: O, no more, no more! You have said you will not grant us anything. Hear us.

CORIOLANUS: Aufidius, and you Volsces, mark; for we’ll hear naught from Rome in private. Your request?

Volumnia to Coriolanus, No. 2

**To be silent and not speak would betray
The life we have led since thy exile; may
Prayers to our gods be our comfort. Each one
Of us, seeing suffering as it is,
Shaking with sorrow, fear seeing our son,
Husband and father tearing apart his
Country. This could be a calamity,
For either thou’lt be in chains, or grandly
Lord over the country’s destruction. If
I cannot persuade thee rather to show
Fair mercy to both parts than to seek stiff
Pain on one, thou shalt no sooner lay low
Thy country than to tread over thy wife
Or assault thy mother who brought thee life.**