

Coriolanus abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 1

Pride

Situation: The well-meaning Menenius tells the plebeians through a nice and light story that they can't mess with the patricians in the Roman Senate "who care for you like fathers." As he finishes the story, his young friend Martius enters and blasts the citizens, the plebeians.

MARTIUS: What's the matter, you dissentious rogues.

FIRST CITIZEN: We have ever your good word.

Martius to Citizens

He that will give good words to thee flatters
Abhorrently. What is it that matters,
You curs, that like neither peace nor war? He
That should find you lions, finds you hares; where
Foxes, geese. You are no surer than be
Coals of fire on ice, or hailstones that dare
The sun. He that favors you swims with fins
Of lead; he that depends on your grace wins
With rushes o'er swords. Trust ye, you who do
Every minute change your mind; you who sigh,
Calling him noble that until now you
Did hate, him vile that was your strength? You cry
Against the Senate, who keep you in awe,
Yet else you'd kill each other without law.

MARTIUS TO MENENIUS: What's their seeking?

MENENIUS: For corn at their own rates.

MARTIUS: Hang 'em! They'll sit by th' fire and presume to know what's done i th' Capitol, who's
like to rise, who thrives and who declines. They say there's grain enough? Let me use my sword.

MENENIUS: Nay, for though abundantly they lack discretion, yet are they passing cowardly.

MARTIUS: Hang 'em! They said they were a hungry; that dogs must eat; that the gods sent not
corn for the rich men only. Go, get you home, you fragments!