

Coriolanus

Act V, sc. 3 (line 132)

CORIOLANUS

Not of a woman's tenderness to be,
Requires nor child nor woman's face to see.
I have sat too long.

VOLUMNIA

Nay, go not from us thus.

If it were so that our request did tend

To save the Romans, thereby to destroy

The Volsces whom you serve, you might condemn us,

As poisonous of your honour: no; our suit

Is that you reconcile them: while the Volsces

May say 'This mercy we have show'd;' the Romans,

'This we received;' and each in either side

Give the all-hail to thee and cry 'Be blest

For making up this peace!' Thou know'st, great son,

The end of war's uncertain, but this certain,

That, if thou conquer Rome, the benefit

Which thou shalt thereby reap is such a name,

Whose repetition will be dogg'd with curses;

Whose chronicle thus writ: 'The man was noble,

But with his last attempt he wiped it out;

Destroy'd his country, and his name remains

To the ensuing age abhorr'd.' Speak to me, son:

Thou hast affected the fine strains of honour,

To imitate the graces of the gods;
To tear with thunder the wide cheeks o' the air,
And yet to charge thy sulphur with a bolt
That should but rive an oak. Why dost not speak?
Think'st thou it honourable for a noble man
Still to remember wrongs? Daughter, speak you:
He cares not for your weeping. Speak thou, boy:
Perhaps thy childishness will move him more
Than can our reasons. There's no man in the world
More bound to 's mother; yet here he lets me prate
Like one i' the stocks. Thou hast never in thy life
Show'd thy dear mother any courtesy,
When she, poor hen, fond of no second brood,
Has cluck'd thee to the wars and safely home,
Loaden with honour. Say my request's unjust,
And spurn me back: but if it be not so,
Thou art not honest; and the gods will plague thee,
That thou restrain'st from me the duty which
To a mother's part belongs. He turns away:
Down, ladies; let us shame him with our knees.
To his surname Coriolanus 'longs more pride
Than pity to our prayers. Down: an end;
This is the last: so we will home to Rome,
And die among our neighbours. Nay, behold 's:

This boy, that cannot tell what he would have
But kneels and holds up bands for fellowship,
Does reason our petition with more strength
Than thou hast to deny 't. Come, let us go:
This fellow had a Volscian to his mother;
His wife is in Corioli and his child
Like him by chance. Yet give us our dispatch:
I am hush'd until our city be a-fire,
And then I'll speak a little.