

Coriolanus abbreviated

Act 3, Scene 2

Mother to Son

Situation: Volumnia gives her son, Coriolanus, a good talking-to, suggesting he back off his criticism of the common-folk, telling him we're all in this together, but her hot-tempered son continues to lash out at the plebeians. Menenius asks him to "put not your worthy rage into your tongue" and says "come, come, you have been too rough."

VOLUMNIA: You are too absolute. I have heard you say, honor and policy, like inseparable friends, i' th' war do grow together. Grant that, and tell me in peace what each of them by th' other lose than they combine not there.

CORIOLANUS: Tush, tush!

MENENIUS: A good demand.

VOLUMNIA: If it be honor in your wars to seem the same you are not, how is it less that it shall hold companionship in peace with honor, as in war, since it is equally necessary to both?

CORIOLANUS: Why force you this?

Volumnia to Coriolanus, No 1

Because it now lies on you to speak to
The people, not as your heart doth prompt you,
But with such language you know through rote; make
Not your true beliefs known through any word.
This no more dishonors you than to take
A town with kindness, reducing hazard
To fortune and blood. Just put to the test
Thy stout heart; be modest as the ripest
Mulberry that'll not hold handling. And
Bow thy head; say you're their soldier. My son,
Go humbly to them with your cap in hand;
With a knee kissing the stones, for action
Is most eloquent. I've learned through the years,
Ignorant eyes are more learned than ears.