FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION 2011

CORIOLANUS

BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY

John Logan

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by

William Shakespeare

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INT. DARKENED ROOM - DAY

The blade of a knife.

Pulled from its sheath, intricate tribal etchings on the blade catching the light.

The blade being pulled across a sharpening stone. Swoosh-swoosh-swoosh. Rhythmic. A well-practiced hand. A muscular, tattooed arm.

The blade held up. Razor sharp. The glow of a TV in the darkened room is the only illumination.

We see images on the TV:

GLOBAL AND URBAN STRIFE ... slums ... barricades ... poverty ... starvation ... demonstrations ... repression ... refugee camps ... barbed wire prisons ... riot police ... tear gas ... violence...

Then the images settle to now, BREAKING NEWS:

FOOD RIOTS IN ROME. Images of a protest march. A crowd filling the streets. Soldiers moving into position. We see placards: "DOGS MUST EAT," "MEAT WAS MADE FOR MOUTHS."

The man sharpening the knife watches the images. His eyes are cold. Almost disinterested.

Then he stops.

Frozen in mid-stroke.

Something on the TV suddenly <u>rivets him</u>.

His eyes no longer cold.

The TV shows one of the soldiers, a high-ranking officer. Imperious. Giving orders. We will come to know this is a man as Caius Martius -- Coriolanus.

<u>TULLUS AUFIDIUS</u>, the man sharpening the knife, gazes at the image on the screen.

He leans forward. Emerging from the darkness. We see his face.

He is a handsome and imposing figure, magnetic in his personality. Charismatic, yes, but also neurotic and edgy. Uncomfortable in his own skin. Some demons there.

He watches the face of Caius Martius on the TV screen.

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Then he puts the point of his knife against the screen. Against Caius Martius' heart.

Holds it there ... Presses the point against the screen ... Muscles knotting in his forearm ... As if he could thrust the knife through the screen and into the heart of Caius Martius...

His nemesis ... His dark angel.

Sharp cut to--

EXT. ROME - STREET - DAY

We move with an intense woman down the street. She is nervous. Checks she is not being followed.

She is TAMORA, an extreme figure on the political landscape. To the Roman elite she is a dangerous anarchist -- to her supporters she is an ardent patriot and democrat.

As she moves, we take in Rome.

It might be Mexico City. Or Chechnia. Or El Salvador. Or Detroit. Or Baghdad. Or London.

This Rome is a modern place. It is our world right now: immediately recognizable to us. Elements of classical architecture loom over decay. Monolithic modernism and brave public monuments are lost in a sea of brazen advertising billboards, neon shopping plazas and drab super-highways. Splendor and squalor sit side-by-side.

It is a volatile, dangerous world.

William Shakespeare's Rome.

She comes to a graffiti-covered apartment building. Looks around. Enters.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

A secret political meeting in a police state.

Tension. Cigarette smoke hangs in the air. Men and women gathered, hushed and urgent tones. A cell meeting of the political opposition, the resistance.

A TV shows the food marches elsewhere in the city. The gathering storm.

CASSIUS is a leading proletariat organizer:

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CASSIUS
Before we proceed any further, hear me speak -- You are all resolved rather to die than to famish?

The others agree. They are not wild-eyed radicals. They are normal people, from all walks of life. You and me.

CASSIUS
First, you know Caius Martius is chief enemy to the people.

A voice from the back of the room:

TAMORA
Let us kill him.

The others turn. Tamora, just entering, pulls off her coat, joins the others:

TAMORA
And we'll have corn at our own price. Is it a verdict?

Some are unsure. She is too extreme for some.

CASSIUS
(pressing slightly)
We are accounted poor citizens, the patricians good ... The leanness that afflicts us, the object of our misery, our sufferance, is a gain to them. Let us revenge this with our sticks ere we become rakes! ... I speak this in hunger for bread, not in thirst for revenge.

A woman, a YOUNG MOTHER, protests:

YOUNG MOTHER
Will you proceed especially against Caius Martius?

CASSIUS
Against him first.

A COLLEGE PROFESSOR, speaks up:

COLLEGE PROFESSOR
Consider you what services he has done for his country?

TAMORA
(snaps)
Very well, and could be content to give
(MORE)

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TAMORA (cont'd)
him good report for it -- but that he pays himself with being proud.

COLLEGE PROFESSOR
Nay, but speak not maliciously.

She has over-played her hand. Pretends to back down:

TAMORA
I say unto you, what he hath done famously, he did it to that end...
(a snarky smile)
He did it to please his mother.

Some laugh at her gossip.

Then the TV image switches to a BREAKING NEWS update:

From the Roman Senate. An august press room. A Senator is moving to a podium to make a statement.

He is Senator MENENIUS is a seasoned and wily politician. Silver hair, perfectly tailored suit. He is known as a folksy "man of the people." It is a role he plays to perfection.

CASSIUS
Soft, who comes here?

COLLEGE PROFESSOR
Worthy Senator Menenius, one that hath always loved the people.

TAMORA
He's one honest enough; would all the rest were so.

MENENIUS
(on TV)
Why, masters, my good friends, mine honest neighbors,
Will you undo yourselves?
(smiles benevolently)
I tell you, friends, most charitable care
Have the patricians of you,
For your wants,
Your suffering in this dearth, you may as well
Strike at the heavens with your staves as lift them
Against the Roman state--

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TAMORA
(speaking to the TV)
Suffer us to famish, and their storehouses crammed with grain--

The others shush her.

MENENIUS
(on TV)
Alack, you are transported by calamity
Thither where more attends you; and you slander
The helms of the state, who care for you like fathers,
When you curse them as enemies--

Cassius mutes the TV. We see Senator Menenius continuing with his speech; his attempt to calm the dangerous situation.

CASSIUS
Care for us? They never cared for us yet!

TAMORA
If the wars eat us not up, they will: and that's all the love they bear us.

The others are growing increasingly restive -- shifting -- tension building--

CASSIUS
Why stay we prating here?

TAMORA
No more talking on it!
To the Capitol! Come! Come!

Cut to--

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Tamora, Cassius and the others are now in the midst of the protest march. The crowd has become a mob, with a life and will of its own. The crowd surges forward--

They round a corner and suddenly stop--

For a formidable sight awaits them--

RIOT POLICE.

Rows of black uniforms. Full riot gear with plexiglass shields and dangerous truncheons.

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A few soldiers on horses as well.

The crowd starts and shifts nervously, unsure how to proceed. Should they launch themselves against this monolithic military force?

A long, tense beat.

Then...

One of the horsemen trots forward...

He rides a beautiful white horse...

It is CAIUS MARTIUS. (Soon to be given the honorary title Coriolanus.) He is intense and patrician. Uncompromising. A man of steel. A soldier. He wears a crisp, military uniform.

From his position on the horse, Martius looks over the rioters...

His gaze is ice...

A long beat...

Then he dismounts...

He slowly walks to the unruly mob...

With no hesitation, unarmed...

He stops before them...

And speaks with absolute disdain.

MARTIUS
What's the matter, you dissentious rogues,
That, rubbing the poor itch of your opinion,
Make yourselves scabs?

CASSIUS
(sarcastic)
We have ever your good word.

MARTIUS
(snaps)
He that will give good words to thee will flatter
Beneath abhorring.

The crowd is hushed. Taking in his every word.

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We note a TV news crew has moved into position and is filming eagerly. Some in the crowd film with cell phone cameras. Streaming video. *We intercut some of these perspectives.*

MARTIUS
What would you have, you curs?
He that trusts to you,
Where he should find you lions, finds you hares;
Where foxes, geese.

He walks along the front of the crowd. Some are frightened by the great Martius. Some are even awed. Others glare at him with loathing.

MARTIUS
Who deserves greatness
Deserves your hate...
Hang ye! Trust ye?
With every minute you do change your mind,
And call him noble that was now your hate,
Him vile that was your garland.

He continues along the crowd, his cold eyes taking in face after face:

MARTIUS
What's the matter,
That in these several places of the city
You cry against the noble Senate, who,
Under the gods, keep you in awe, which else
Would feed on one another?

He stops and glares at the mob with seething anger.

He climbs back onto his horse. Stares down at them.

An ultimatum:

MARTIUS
Go ... GET YOU HOME, YOU FRAGMENTS!

A tense beat.

The riot police shift nervously.

The crowd is unsure.

The TV news crew films everything.

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Cassius looks around. He sees the police ready with tear gas. He sees old men, women and children in his crowd. He doesn't want this to explode.

He exchanges a few whispers works with Tamora. Word is passed and the crowd begins to disperse. Some run off in a panic. Others walk away.

The danger has passed.

Senator Menenius, who has been watching from nearby, gestures for Martius to join him. He is an old family friend of Martius' as well as his mentor and chief political advisor.

Menenius is relieved bloodshed has been avoided.

MENENIUS
These are almost thoroughly persuaded;
For though abundantly they lack
discretion,
Yet are they passing cowardly.

MARTIUS
They are dissolved. Hang 'em.

Senator Menenius watches the crowd. Disturbed.

MENENIUS
I would they were abed.

MARTIUS
I would they were in Tiber.

They move off.

INT. DARKENED ROOM - DAY

We see the TV image of Martius railing at the people from before:

MARTIUS
(on TV)
Go ... GET YOU HOME, YOU FRAGMENTS!

Tullus Aufidius is leaning in. Watching so closely.

From his POV: the pixilated close-up of Martius' face on the screen.

He runs his knife blade back and forth. Turns it in the light; the reflection of Martius' face distorting as he rotates the blade.

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Then Aufidius leans back again.

Back into the shadows. Disappearing.

EXT. MILITARY COMMAND CENTER - DAY

Rome's military headquarters. A high security building like the Pentagon.

INT. ROMAN WAR ROOM - DAY

Martius is seated with several MILITARY OFFICERS and AIDES.

Also with him is TITUS. He younger than Martius, an old friend and comrade-in-arms. Like Martius he has seen a lot of battle.

COMINIUS, an older general, enters. He is an experienced commander of men also used to dealing with the necessary politics of civilian oversight. West Point bearing.

All salute. Cominius returns the salute.

COMINIUS
The news is the Volsces are in arms.

An aide presses a remote. Grainy video images play on a monitor: Volscian soldiers, jeeps, tanks.

One section shows a quick image of the rebel leader, a striking man called Tullus Aufidius, riding past in a jeep.

COMINIUS
They have a leader,
Tullus Aufidius, that will put you to it.

MARTIUS
I sin in envying his nobility,
And were I any thing but what I am,
I would wish me only he.

SENATOR
You have fought together?

MARTIUS
He is a lion
That I am proud to hunt.

Martius takes the remote control. Stops the video. Rewinds to the unclear image of Aufidius.

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MARTIUS
Titus Lartius, thou
Shalt see me once more strike at Tullus'
face.

TITUS
Lead you on.

Martius rewinds and plays the image of Aufidius again, rewinds and plays it again, almost obsessively.

We push in on the video image of Aufidius...

Aufidius appears to be staring right back at Martius...

And this takes us to...

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING-WAR ROOM - NIGHT

... The same face.

Aufidius, who is the leader of the rebel Volscian forces, stands deep in thought.

The Volsces are an insurgent force challenging the monolithic might of Rome: rebels that suggest to us Latin American revolutionaries or Hamas fighters or Chechnian separatists.

They are a dangerous guerilla force.

We are in the Volsce war room in an old apartment building. A basement. No windows. Secure.

OFFICERS and some civilian POLITICIANS. The room is filled with military maps, weapons, surveillance photos.

VOLSCE POLITICIAN
So, your opinion is, Aufidius,
That they of Rome are entered in our
counsels
And know how we proceed.

AUFIDIUS
(snaps)
Is it not yours?
Tis not four days gone since I heard
thence.

VOLSCE OFFICER
We never yet made doubt but Rome was
ready
To answer us.

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VOLSCE POLITICIAN
And it is rumored Martius, your old enemy, leads in their preparation.

He tosses a glossy magazine on the desk, a picture of Martius on the cover.

Aufidius' eyes spark at the image of Martius.

He picks up the magazine and carefully tears off the cover picture of Martius, looking at the picture deeply.

He continues with a strange and grim fire:

AUFIDIUS
If we and Caius Martius chance to meet,
'Tis sworn between us we shall ever strike
Till one can do no more.
By the elements,
If ever again I meet him beard to beard,
He's mine or I am his.

EXT. MARTIUS VILLA - DAY

A beautiful butterfly. Catching the light perfectly, almost iridescent.

It floats before a palatial mansion in the suburbs of the great city. Manicured lawns. Formal gardens. Classical architectural lines.

This fine home of aristocratic privilege seems a world away from the urban blight of Rome.

In the immaculate front gardens YOUNG MARTIUS, Martius' son, is playing. The boy is about ten. There is something grim and lonely about him, without charm.

Young Martius chases after the butterfly, trying to catch it. He fails. The butterfly flits away. Young Martius leaps after it. Again he misses.

Finally the frustrated boy manages to catch the butterfly. In his rage he tears it to pieces, brutally shredding it.

We realize he is being observed...

INT. MARTIUS VILLA -- LIVING ROOM - DAY

... VIRGILIA, Martius' wife, stands at the window. Disturbed by the sight of her son ripping apart the butterfly.

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She sees Young Martius stop and look at the tiny bit of blood on his fingers. Young Martius is unmoved. He glances up. Locks eyes with his mother.

She turns away.

Virgilia was well-chosen for her role as wife to one of Rome's most aristocratic men. She is beautiful and graceful but -- like Diana thrown into lion's den of the Windsor family -- woefully out of her depth. We feel an inner fragility to her.

The room is spacious and elegantly appointed. A lovely Roman statue in one corner. This is a place of wealth, order and control.

A fine flat-screen TV flickers with images of war. We see helicopters zooming over desert landscape ... Imbedded war correspondents ... Tanks ... Combat ... Romans ... Volscians.

VOLUMNIA, Martius' mother, stands and watches the TV. She is an imposing woman, handsome and tall, impeccably dressed. Adamantine in her strength.

Virgilia moves from the window. Sits on a sofa. She watches the TV news footage of the war, upset by the images.

A frozen silence.

Then:

VOLUMNIA
I pray you, daughter, sing, or express yourself in a more comfortable sort. If my son were my husband, I should more freely rejoice in that absence wherein he won honor than in the embracements of his bed where he would show most love.

She moves across the room to fetch a cigarette. She moves, always, with stately grace.

She walks past a series of photographs. They tell the story of Martius' life: the happy baby; the stern dead father; the rigid young military cadet; the formal wedding; the restrained and unsmiling adult.

In the photos we sense a transformation: innocent boy to experienced, severe looking soldier. Volumnia is present in most of the pictures.

As:

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VOLUMNIA
When yet he was but tender-bodied and the only son of my womb, I, considering how honor would become such a person, was pleased to let him seek danger where he was like to find fame.

She lights her cigarette.

VOLUMNIA
To a cruel war I sent him, from whence he returned, his brows bound with oak.

VIRGILIA
But had he died in the business, madam, how then?

VOLUMNIA
Then his good report should have been my son.
(she rivets Virgilia)
Had I a dozen sons I had rather have eleven die nobly for their country than one voluptuously surfeit out of action.

A MAID enters. She speaks to Volumnia (the true mistress of the house) not to Virgilia.

MAID
Madam, Senator Menenius is come to visit you.

VOLUMNIA
Tell Menenius we are fit to bid him welcome.

The Maid goes.

VIRGILIA
Beseech you, give me leave to retire myself.

VOLUMNIA
Indeed, you shall not!

She turns off the TV and goes to a bar to mix drinks. She mixes the drinks aggressively, strangely inspired by the discussion of war:

VOLUMNIA
Methinks I hear hither your husband's drum;
Methinks I see him stamp thus, and call thus:
(MORE)

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VOLUMNIA (cont'd)
"Come on, you cowards! You were got in fear,
Though you were born in Rome." His bloody brow
Then wiping, forth he goes.

VIRGILIA
His bloody brow? O Jupiter, no blood...

VOLUMNIA
Away, you fool! It more becomes a man
Than gold his trophy.

VIRGILIA
Heavens bless my lord from fell Aufidius...

VOLUMNIA
He'll beat Aufidius' head below his knee
And tread upon his neck.

Senator Menenius enters, he is comfortable in this house and an old ally of Volumnia's.

MENENIUS
My ladies both, good day to you.

Volumnia hands him one of the drinks she has been mixing: a perfect martini. She knows how he takes his drink. She is not above flirting with him when it suits her ends.

MENENIUS
How do you both?
(to Virgilia)
And how does your little son?

VIRGILIA
I thank you, sir; well, good.

VOLUMNIA
He had rather play with swords and hear a drum than look upon his schoolmaster.

MENENIUS
On my word, the father's son!

He and Volumnia laugh.

Menenius has sensed Virgilia's tension. Tries to cheer her:

MENENIUS
Come, I must have you play the idle housewife with me this afternoon.

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VIRGILIA
No, good sir, I will not out of doors.

MENENIUS
Not out of doors!

VOLUMNIA
She shall, she shall.

VIRGILIA
Indeed, no, by your patience. I'll not over the threshold till my lord return from the wars.

MENENIUS
Fie, you confine yourself most unreasonably.

VIRGILIA
I cannot go hither.

MENENIUS
(playfully)
You would be another Penelope; yet they say all the yarn she spun in Ulysses' absence did but fill Ithaca full of moths.

VIRGILIA
No, good sir, pardon me; indeed, I will not forth.

MENENIUS
Go with me and I'll tell you excellent news of your husband.

VIRGILIA
O, good sir, there can be none yet.

MENENIUS
There came news from him last night.

Volumnia pounces, moving in:

VOLUMNIA
Indeed?

MENENIUS
Your lord and Titus Lartius are set down before the Volscian city of Corioles. They nothing doubt prevailing and to make it brief wars ... This is true, on mine honor; and so, I pray, go out with us.

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VIRGILIA
(again declining)
Give me excuse, good sir. I will obey you in everything hereafter.

VOLUMNIA
(snaps)
Let her alone. As she is now, she will but disease our better mirth.

She takes Menenius arm and pulls him out, eager for more news of her son.

Virgilia sits for a beat.

Then she presses a button on the remote control. The TV goes on again. More news reports of the war.

We see images of the Volscian town of Corioles. A "BREAKING NEWS" scroll runs across the bottom of the screen ... The Battle for Corioles ...

Virgilia watches the war footage, her eyes haunted.

Hard cut to--

EXT. CORIOLES - DAY

BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! A series of explosions jolt us.

Corioles is a small urban center. Smoke billows up from areas of the city. The steady crack and rattle of gunfire. The occasional thud of explosions.

We see urban street-to-street fighting. The images are startling in their familiarity: this could be Basra or Belfast.

The battle is photographed in a gritty exposure. Color is drained out -- blood is a darker red like oil. Soldiers are dark forms moving through shadows and smoke.

Martius and Titus, leading a platoon of around twenty Roman SOLDIERS, run into view and take cover. Bullets zip and snap around them.

The Roman soldiers wear modern battle fatigues and body armor, tricked out with all the latest tech gear. The Volscians, being a poor guerilla force, wear thrown together uniforms that look almost tribal.

Martius calls over the incessant din of battle to Titus and the soldiers:

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MARTIUS
They fear us not, but issue forth their city.

Sniper bullets slam into a wall near him. He coughs away the smoke and debris. This only makes him more angry:

MARTIUS
They do disdain us much beyond our thoughts,
Which makes me sweat with wrath!
He that retires, I'll take him for a Volsce,
And he shall feel mine edge!

Martius leaps up and races on. The others follow in military order.

The Roman soldiers move along the street -- it is chaotic -- explosions, smoke and sniper fire -- they duck into doorways and behind abandoned cars -- returning fire as best they can--

Martius leads -- firing stead bursts from his machine gun--

It is slow and bloody going--

Finally the Romans turn a corner and are stopped by a roadblock: a burning bus that fills the entire street--

The Volsces use this roadblock to ambush the Roman soldiers--

We see glimpses of Volscian soldiers darting for position -- firing from rooftops and from inside shops--

Blistering crossfire--

INT. BLASTED HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Aufidius runs into a blasted hotel room. Some of his soldiers with him.

He goes to the window. Scans the street below. Sees Martius and the others trapped at the bus. He gestures to an aide for a radio--

EXT. CORIOLES-STREET - DAY

In the face of the crossfire, the Roman soldiers start falling back--

Martius refuses to yield -- pushing and shoving his men toward the burning bus -- screaming in fury over the noise:

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MARTIUS
You souls of geese,
That bear the shapes of men! PLUTO AND HELL!
All hurt behind! Backs red, and faces pale
With flight and agued fear! Mend and charge home,
Or, by the fires of heaven, I'll leave the foe
AND MAKE MY WARS ON YOU!

An EXPLOSION -- dirt and brick shards slash across Martius' face -- blood--

This only pushes his fury to white rage--

MARTIUS
Look to it. Come on!
FOLLOW ME!

He leaves his soldiers behind--

Moves alone to the burning bus and fights his way through the flames--

Martius is in his own world now. He doesn't even realize he is alone. He has become a sort of killing machine. A shark moving through the ocean. Ruthless and efficient.

We become the warrior.

From Martius' POV:

We move through disorienting curtains of smoke...

Continue down the street...

Firing a heavy machine gun...

Volscian soldiers contort and die, torn to pieces by the bullets...

The heavy machine gun is empty, we drop it and use a sidearm, firing strategic shots...

Volscian soldiers dart up -- fire -- and die...

We keep moving steadily forward...

Shadowy shapes moving nearby, we fire. Killing civilians. The fortunes of war...

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Strange surreal images. We smash into a house. An OLD MAN crouches, terrified, in a corner. He reaches forward. He is offering us water. An act of kindness amid the carnage...

We move on...

Panicked civilians, scattering in terror...

Volscian soldiers rush us, attacking, we slam them aside...

We duck down, roll under a car, emerge and fire...

More Volscians die...

We continue forward...

Then the pistol is empty, we drop it and pull a machete-like knife...

Still moving relentlessly forward...

Slashing and killing...

Hand-to-hand now...

Carnage.

EXT. CORIOLES-ALLEY - DAY

Aufidius and his aides are racing down an alley, trying to get to Martius--

Roman fire stops them--

They return fire as they divert down another alley, trying for a better strategic position, running flat out--

EXT. CORIOLES - LATER

Titus and the soldiers are still pinned down at the burning bus. Two soldiers race back to Titus to report, they dive for cover.

TITUS
What is become of Martius?

SOLDIER 1
Slain, sir, doubtless.

SOLDIER 2
He is himself alone,
To answer all the city.

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TITUS
Thou art lost, Martius...

Titus has no time to mourn. He looks over the hopeless situation. Scanning the rooftops, windows and shops.

Then he stops ... He sees something ... Past the burning bus ... Through the smoke and flames...

He glimpses a ghostly figure...

TITUS
Who's yonder,
That does appear as he were flayed? ...
O gods! He has the stamp of Martius.

It is indeed Martius.

A shocking sight.

Drenched head-to-toe in blood.

His face splattered with gore.

His eyes wild.

Lost in something like rapture.

MARTIUS
Come I too late?! ... Come I too late?!

TITUS
Ay, if you come not in the blood of others,
But mantled in your own.

Martius laughs wildly and embraces Titus, who comes away splattered with blood:

MARTIUS
O, let me clip ye
In arms as sound as when I wooed, in heart
As merry as when our nuptial day was done!

SUDDENLY -- a deafening explosion -- and RPG EXPLODING from nearby. Then gunfire. Bullets shatter windows. The Volscians are attacking again.

The Romans instantly begin diving for cover and taking up defensive positions--

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Martius scans the location. Sees the attack is coming from an old Hilton hotel. Now pockmarked with bullets and artillery shells. Most of the windows shattered.

This is the Volscian stronghold. The last stand. He sees flashes of Volscian soldiers moving on the roof and balconies, and snipers firing from windows.

There is an open plaza, littered with bodies and debris, in front of the hotel.

Martius stops scanning with his binoculars--

Sees Aufidius moving in the hotel, directing the battle--

MARTIUS
There is the man of my soul's hate--
Aufidius--
Piercing our Romans.

TITUS
Worthy sir, thou bleeds.
Thy exercise hath been too violent
For a second course of fight.

MARTIUS
Sir, praise me not.
My work hath yet not warmed me.
The blood I drop is more medicinal
Than dangerous to me. To Aufidius thus
I will appear and fight.

He turns to some soldiers, imploring them to join him. His bloody visage and intensity are strangely inspiring, his ferocity infectious:

MARTIUS
(to soldiers)
If any such be here-
As it were sin to doubt - that love this painting
Wherein you see me smeared; if any fear
Lesser his person than an ill report;
If any think brave death outweighs bad life,
And that his country's dearer than himself;
Let him alone, or so many so minded,
Wave thus, to express his disposition,
AND FOLLOW MARTIUS!

The soldiers are pumped up -- like Marines straining for combat--

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MARTIUS
O, ME ALONE! MAKE YOU A SWORD OF ME!

They bolt--

Zigzagging across the plaza toward the hotel--

Titus and the others provide covering fire--

EXT. CORIOLES-PLAZA - DAY

Martius zigzags with his men across the dangerously exposed plaza--

They return fire at the hotel as best they can, but the barrage from the Volscians is murderous--

Roman soldiers contort and fall, blood spraying--

Bullets snap and ricochet everywhere around them--

But still they keep up a steady pace, reloading and firing as they go--

Then Martius is hit--

Blood sprays--

But still he keeps on--

The front of the hotel is closer now--

Martius and his soldiers race to the hotel and crash into the lobby--

INT. CORIOLES-HOTEL-LOBBY - DAY

Martius and his soldiers battle the Volscian defenders in the hotel lobby--

It is the weird and incongruous nature of modern urban warfare: soldiers fighting to the death among hotel couches and tatty corporate artwork--

It is brutal--

Martius and his soldiers cut a bloody swath across the hotel lobby--

Another HUGE EXPLOSION rocks the hotel -- like a seismic blast -- an ugly 1970's chandelier falls--

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Martius and his men move into a stairwell--

INT. CORIOLES-HOTEL-STAIRWELL - DAY

Martius and his men race up the stairway--

Volscians are firing down at them--

Bullets ricochet crazily in the confined stairway, refracting from concrete walls and twisting metal railing, sending up sparks and clouds of dust--

Then Martius slows to a stop.

Looks up.

Aufidius is on the stairway above. Glaring down at him.

A long beat as they lock eyes. Both panting for breath in the heat of the combat.

MARTIUS
I'll fight with none but thee, for I do hate thee.

AUFIDIUS
We hate alike.

Then Martius does something astounding.

He holds out his arms to his sides and drops his weapons. They clatter down.

Aufidius does the same.

The Roman and Volscian soldiers watch.

None daring to interfere.

Martius and Aufidius continue to glare at each other -- dropping weapons -- disarming -- Martius climbing up the stairs, Aufidius coming down -- moving closer and closer--

At an instant--

They slam together--

Fighting without weapons--

Grappling brutally. Tearing at each other. Twining together. Fingers grasping. Teeth snapping. Hands pulling.

It is a bloody, terrible, graceless struggle.

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They crash and slam awkwardly in the claustrophobic stairwell. Smashing into the walls. Falling from level to level--

Then--

Another EXPLOSION rocks the hotel--

Part of the roof COLLAPSES--

Concrete SLAMS down--

A cloud of smoke, dust and debris obscures everything--

Martius is tossed violently to the ground in the action--

Aufidius is pulled away by several of his men. They drag him to safety. Roman soldiers fire after them. The sound is deafening in the confined garage.

But Aufidius and his comrades disappear into a cloud of dust. Gone.

Martius glares after him. Wipes blood from his eyes.

INT. CORIOLES-HOTEL-LOBBY - NIGHT

The hotel lobby has been turned into a hastily assembled emergency triage station.

The moaning and screaming of the injured are constant. Roman medics attend to the wounded: administering IVs; arranging evacuations; performing battlefield surgery.

Martius sits, dried blood covering his face, looking over his injured and dying soldiers as a medic stitches up a wound in his arm. Titus is with him.

General Cominius enters with several attending officers, going to congratulate Martius.

COMINIUS
If I should tell thee over this thy day's work,
Thou would not believe thy deeds.

Martius is barely listening. His attention is on a YOUNG SOLDIER across the room. The Young Soldier is injured, pale and thirsty. Dying.

COMINIUS
But I'll report it
Where Senators shall mingle tears with
(MORE)

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COMINIUS (cont'd)
smiles;
Where great patricians shall attend and shrug,
In the end admire and say: “We thank the gods
Our Rome hath such a soldier.”

MARTIUS
(shifting painfully)
Pray now, no more. My mother,
When she does praise me, grieves me.
I have done as you have done - that's what I can;
Induced as you have been - that's for my country.

Martius continues to look at the poor dying soldier.

TITUS
Rome must know
The value of her own. It were a concealment
Worse than a theft,
To hide your doings.

MARTIUS
I have some wounds upon me, and they smart
To hear themselves remembered.

The surgeon finishes stitching Martius’ arm. Starts to clean another wound.

COMINIUS
Should they not,
Well might they fester against ingratitude ...
Too modest are you.

Impatient, Martius rises, painfully and slowly. He takes his canteen and crosses to the Young Soldier. Gives his canteen to the boy. The Young Soldier drinks. His deep, sad eyes gaze up at Martius.

Martius watches as...

The Young Soldier dies. The light goes from his eyes. His head hangs awkwardly. His boyish face is leaden.

Martius suddenly finds himself exhausted. Morally and physically spent.

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MARTIUS
(to Cominius)
I will go wash;
And when my face is fair, you shall perceive
Whether I blush or no ... Howbeit, I thank you.

Martius stares at the dead soldier.

EXT. CORIOLES-STREET - NIGHT

Aufidius and some of his Volscian soldiers, bloody and filthy, are on foot.

They are moving through the outskirts of Corioles, leaving the city. Exhausted after the long and failed battle.

Fires burn from blasted shops and homes. The Romans have clearly laid waste to this part of the city.

There is a minivan stopped ahead of them. Bullets holes everywhere. Bodies inside.

They walk to it. Aufidius looks in. A dead family. Father, mother, kids in the back. Bloody toys on the floor of the minivan.

Roman atrocities.

Aufidius gazes at the bodies. His face hardens.

He whispers to himself:

AUFIDIUS
Five times, Martius,
I have fought with thee; so often hast thou beat me,
And would do so, I think, should we encounter
As often as we eat.

He becomes aware some of his men are looking at him, disturbed at his fervor.

AUFIDIUS
For where
I thought to crush him in an equal force,
True sword to sword, I'll stab him some way,
Or wrath -- or craft -- may get him.

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SOLDIER
He's the devil.

AUFIDIUS
Bolder, though not so subtle.

A beat. Aufidius continues with prayer-like intensity:

AUFIDIUS
My valor, poisoned with him,
Shall fly out of itself...
Nor sleep, nor sanctuary, being naked,
Sick, the prayers of priests,
Nor times of sacrifice,
Shall lift up their rotten privilege
And custom,
Against my hate to Martius.

In the shattered glass of the minivan window, Aufidius suddenly sees himself.

He studies his own face, nurturing his dark thoughts.

AUFIDIUS
Where I find him, were it
At home, upon my brother's guard, even
there,
Will I wash my fierce hand in his heart.

INT. POLITICO BAR - DAY

Back in Rome, we are at a comfortable restaurant/bar near the Senate where politicians gather to eat, drink, gossip and conspire. The business of state is conducted over steak and martinis.

Comfortable red leather booths. Wooden panelling.

Two Tribunes -- Senators chosen to speak for the people -- are having lunch.

BRUTUS is a large man in a rumpled grey suit; a sweating bear with a taste for bare-knuckle politics. SICINIUS is smaller and vulpine; crafty and cold.

Both are ambitious politicos used to manipulating the people and the press for their personal ends. With them sits Cassius, the political agitator we met before.

The TV over the bar shows images of Martius' victory: parading Roman troops; Volscian prisoners; flags; adoring crowds; triumphant slogans; "Mission Accomplished."

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SICINIUS
Was ever man so proud as is this Martius?

CASSIUS
He has no equal.

SICINIUS
When we were chosen Tribunes for the people-

BRUTUS
Marked you his lip and eyes?

SICINIUS
Nay, but his taunts.

They see Senator Menenius approaching. Sicinius nods to Cassius, who quickly goes.

Menenius stops by on his way out. He is jolly, knowing the victory will assure his protege's political future:

MENENIUS
The augurer tells me we shall have news tonight.

BRUTUS
Good or bad?

MENENIUS
Not according to the prayer of the people, for they love not Martius.

SICINIUS
Nature teaches beasts to know their friends.

MENENIUS
You blame Martius for being proud?

BRUTUS
We do it not alone, sir.

Subtly, the polite chit-chat is turning more serious and pointed; Menenius growing sharper. The gloves are coming off.

MENENIUS
I know you can do very little alone ...
You talk of pride: O that you could turn your eyes toward the napes of your necks, and make but an interior survey of your good selves! O that you could!

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BRUTUS
What then, sir?

MENENIUS
Why, then you should discover a brace of unmeriting, proud, violent, testy magistrates, alias fools, as any in Rome.

The saturnine Sicinius' response seems almost a threat:

SICINIUS
Menenius, you are known well enough too.

MENENIUS
I am known to be a humorous patrician, and one that loves a cup of hot wine with not a drop of allaying water in it; one that converses more with the buttock of the night than with the forehead of the morning. What I think I utter, and spend my malice in my breath.

BRUTUS
Come, sir, come, we know you well enough.

MENENIUS
You know neither me, yourselves nor anything ... You are ... ambitious.

A tense beat. They are formidable adversaries.

MENENIUS
Good-e'en to your worships. More of your conversation would infect my brain, being the herdsmen of the beastly plebeians ... I will be bold to take my leave of you.

He goes. The Tribunes watch him cut through the lunch crowd and exit.

EXT. SENATE - DAY

The Roman Senate is constructed with classical symmetry and clean, square lines. Probably the most striking and beautiful building in Rome.

INT. SENATE-CORRIDOR - DAY

Volumnia, Virgilia and Menenius are hurrying down a corridor, excited. All are well-dressed, for an important public event.

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VOLUMNIA
Honorable Menenius, my boy Martius approaches! For the love of Juno, let's go.

MENENIUS
Is he not wounded? He was wont to come home wounded.

VIRGILIA
O, no, no, no...

VOLUMNIA
(victoriously)
O, he is wounded! I thank the gods for it.

MENENIUS
So do I too -- if it be not too much. Brings a victory in his pocket, the wounds become him. Has he disciplined Aufidius soundly?

VOLUMNIA
Titus Lartius says they fought together, but Aufidius got off.

VIRGILIA
In truth, there's wondrous things spoke of him. Gods grant them true.

VOLUMNIA
(an exhalation of scorn)
True?!

MENENIUS
I'll be sworn they are true. Where is he wounded?

Volumnia and Menenius now gleefully add up her son's wounds like accountants -- or campaign managers.

VOLUMNIA
In the shoulder and in the left arm. There will be large scars to show the people, when he shall stand for his place ... He received in the repulse of Tarquin seven hurts in the body.

MENENIUS
One in the neck, and two in the thigh - there's nine that I know.

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VOLUMNIA
He had, before this last expedition, twenty-five wounds upon him.

MENENIUS
Now it's twenty-seven. Every gash was an enemy's grave.

We focus on Volumnia's face as she thinks about her son.

VOLUMNIA
Before him
He carries noise, and behind him he leaves tears.
Death, that dark spirit, in his nervy arm doth lie;
Which, being advanced, declines, and then men die.

They hurry to the stop of a grand staircase, where there are people waiting...

INT. SENATE-STAIRS - DAY

They join Cominius and other dignitaries at the top of a majestic stairway.

An honor guard of Roman soldiers in dress uniforms are waiting. Roman flags flutter. All very ceremonial.

Martius enters below. The honor guard snaps to attention.

Martius -- hereafter called Coriolanus -- slowly begins to cross to the steps. We see that walking is very difficult for him. His wounds are severe and every movement is agony.

He has paid a steep price for his victory.

Photographers flash photos and a TV crew film the ceremony.

Coriolanus finally reaches the steps leading up. He takes a breath and slowly begins to climb the stairs, each step a challenge.

Volumnia looks down on him. Unmoved by his pain.

Virgilia is distraught.

As Coriolanus slowly hauls himself up the last few steps, General Cominius speaks into a cluster of microphones and addresses the press:

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COMINIUS
Be it known,
As to us, to all the world, that Caius Martius
Wears this war's garland ... And from this time,
For what he did before Corioles, call him,
With all the applause and clamor of the host,
“Caius Martius Coriolanus!”
(to Martius)
Bear the addition nobly ever!

The soldiers salute in a grim sort of chant:

SOLDIERS
Caius ... Martius ... Coriolanus!

Coriolanus has reached the podium. An awkward beat. Cominius gestures for him to speak into the microphones.

He tersely does so:

CORIOLANUS
No more of this; it does offend my heart.
Pray now, no more.

An awkward silence. Cominius elegantly tries to covers the moment:

COMINIUS
Look, sir, your mother.

CORIOLANUS
O,
You have, I know, petitioned all the gods
For my prosperity.

He kneels to her -- slowly, with great difficulty -- she lets him.

VOLUMNIA
Nay, my good soldier, up.
(he slowly rises)
My gentle Martius, worthy Caius, and
By deed-achieving honor newly named -
What is it? - Coriolanus must I call thee?

She laughs coquettishly, thoroughly upstaging her son.

Then, almost an afterthought:

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VOLUMNIA
But, O, thy wife...

Coriolanus greets Virgilia with the clumsy and stiff formality that marks their marriage.

CORIOLANUS
My gracious silence, hail.

An awkwardly tender kiss. He notes her tears. Reacts coldly.

CORIOLANUS
Would thou have laughed had I come coffined home,
That weeps to see me triumph? Ay, my dear,
Such eyes the widows in Corioles wear,
And mothers that lack sons.

MENENIUS
Now, the gods crown thee!

CORIOLANUS
(greets him warmly)
And live you yet?

VOLUMNIA
(laughs)
I know not where to turn. O, welcome home!
And welcome, general. And you're welcome all!

MENENIUS
A hundred thousand welcomes!

Coriolanus is surrounded by well-wishers and political admirers. Volumnia and Menenius usher him along.

We see the image from TV: The noble warrior returned home. Devoted family. Flags waving. The future golden.

INT. VILLA-BATHROOM - EVENING

And then the hard reality.

Coriolanus' body is a battleground of scars. Some are livid and red, fresh and still oozing blood. Others are pale and blue, discolored and dead.

His body is something monstrous. Stitched up. Patched together. Slashed around. Frankenstein's monster.

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He is leaning against a sink, stripped naked. His muscular if shattered body exposed.

Volumnia sits and dresses her son's wounds. As she always has done. As she always will.

It is a disturbing, intimate image.

CORIOLANUS
The good Senators must be visited;
From whom I have received not only
greetings,
But with them change of honors.

He shifts painfully as she continues to treat one of his wounds.

VOLUMNIA
I have lived
To see inherited my very wishes
And the buildings of my fancy. Only
There's one thing wanting, which I doubt
not but
Our Rome will cast upon thee.

He catches her eye in the mirror, very firm:

CORIOLANUS
Know, good mother,
I had rather be their servant in my way,
Than sway with them in theirs.

They stop when--

Virgilia enters.

She stops in the doorway. It is embarrassing for her, as if she has interrupted two lovers. A long moment.

She looks to her husband.

To Volumnia.

They stare back.

There is no way she can compete with their intimacy.

Surrendering, she silently goes.

INT. VILLA -- HALLWAY - EVENING

Virgilia wanders a long hallway, past a fine collection of antique Roman weaponry. She seems lost.

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She stops and opens a door, glances into her son's bedroom:

Young Martius is asleep.

Her eyes move across his room. The military toys. The little cadet uniform carefully hung. The polished boots waiting.

All stern and joyless. Not like a child's room at all.

Virgilia closes the door and continues down the long hallway, disappearing into darkness.

INT. SENATE-OFFICE - DAY

Darkened office. Brutus and Sicinius sit, heads together, focused.

SICINIUS
He cannot temperately transport his honors, but will
Lose those he hath won.

BRUTUS
I heard him swear,
Were he to stand for Consul, never would he
Appear in the marketplace nor
Showing, as the manner is, his wounds
To the people, beg "their stinking breaths."

SICINIUS
It was his word.

INT. SENATE-CORRIDOR - DAY

Brutus and Sicinius continue as they hurry to the Senate chamber:

BRUTUS
So it must fall out with him,
Or our authorities at an end.

SICINIUS
We must suggest to the people in what hatred
He still hath held them.

BRUTUS
(shushing him)
Peace...

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They enter the Senate Chamber...

INT. SENATE CHAMBER - DAY

Brutus and Sicinius make their way to their seats as we hear:

MENENIUS (V.O.)
... It remains,
As the main point of this our after-
meeting,
To gratify his noble service that
Hath thus stood for his country...

The interior of the grand Senate is an airy, sweeping chamber that suggests the Israeli Knesset or U.N. General Assembly.

Again, classical symmetry is the rule with tiers of seats facing a central dais. An imposing piece of outdated modern art suggesting the might of Rome looms over the chamber like a bird of prey.

Network TV cameras purr quietly from a corner.

Menenius, Cominius, Coriolanus and several other politicos are seating at a central table on the dais, facing the rows of SENATORS.

Menenius is standing at a podium, speaking into a microphone:

MENENIUS
... Therefore, please you,
Most reverend and grave elders, to desire
The present Consul, and last general
In our well-found successes, to report
A little of that worthy work performed
By Caius Martius Coriolanus.

SENATOR
Speak, good Cominius.

General Cominius rises and moves to the podium.

But then Coriolanus abruptly stands--

MENENIUS
Nay, keep your place.

SENATOR
Sit, Coriolanus. Never shame to hear
What you have nobly done.

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CORIOLANUS
Your honors' pardon.
I had rather have my wounds to heal again
Than hear say how I got them.

MENENIUS
Pray now, sit down.

CORIOLANUS
I had rather have one scratch my head in
the sun
When the alarum were struck than idly sit
To hear my nothings monstered.

Coriolanus moves across the dais and exits into a hallway. The door shuts after him.

Menenius sighs. Nods to Cominius.

Cominius moves to the podium and begins to read his speech from a Teleprompter. This all has the rehearsed quality of a campaign nomination speech.

COMINIUS
The deeds of Coriolanus
Should not be uttered feebly. It is held
That valor is the chiefest virtue, and
Most dignifies the haver. Alone he
entered
The mortal gate of the city,
And struck Corioles like a planet,
From face to foot
He was a thing of blood...

Brutus and Sicinius exchange a glance, bored by the political boilerplate.

INT. SENATE-SERVICE CORRIDOR - DAY

Meanwhile, Coriolanus stands in the service corridor beyond the chamber. Green industrial walls. Ugly fluorescent lights above.

He leans against a wall, alone with his thoughts.

Cominius' voice can be heard droning inside.

Then Coriolanus glances up. A CUSTODIAN is pushing a garbage can down the long corridor. He stops when he sees Coriolanus.

Coriolanus' cool, uncompromising stare makes the Custodian uneasy. He turns around and goes back.

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Coriolanus waits. His face strangely vacant.

He flexes his wounded arm. It hurts.

He hears Cominius finish. A good round of applause. He hears his name being cheered: "Coriolanus!"

Coriolanus closes his eyes, steels himself, and then re-enters the chamber...

INT. SENATE CHAMBER - DAY

... Menenius greets him and escorts him to the podium for his "acceptance speech."

MENENIUS
The Senate, Coriolanus, are well pleased
To make thee Consul!

Menenius steps back.

A beat.

Coriolanus stares at the Senators. At the TV cameras.

He leans awkwardly into the podium microphone:

CORIOLANUS
I do owe them still
My life and services.

A beat.

For an acceptance speech, rather terse. Menenius jumps in to salvage the moment:

MENENIUS
It then remains
That you do speak to the people.

CORIOLANUS
I do beseech you,
Let me overleap that custom, for I cannot
entreat them
For my wounds' sake to give their
suffrage.
Please you that I may pass this doing.

From the Senate floor, Sicinius jumps on this:

SICINIUS
Sir, <u>the</u> <u>people</u>
Must have their voices!

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The Senators, led by Brutus, clamor their agreement. Tradition must be obeyed.

MENENIUS
(calming, to Coriolanus)
Pray you, go fit you to the custom.

CORIOLANUS
It is a part
That I shall blush in acting, and might well
Be taken from the people.

Menenius quickly turns off Coriolanus' microphone.

BRUTUS
(to Sicinius)
Mark you that?

CORIOLANUS
To brag unto them "Thus I did, and thus!"
Show them the unaching scars which I should hide,
As if I had received them for the hire
Of their breath only!

Menenius sees Coriolanus is getting angry, this could be disastrous.

He elegantly gestures for Cominius to escort Coriolanus out immediately -- as he addresses the Senators and TV cameras:

MENENIUS
To our noble Consul
Wish we all joy and honor!

He applauds. The applause is taken up by the Senators. Some cheering as well for the hero of Rome ... The two Tribunes, however, are already whispering maliciously to other Senators.

Menenius seems pleased with the general response. So far, so good.

INT. VILLA -- LIVING ROOM - DAY

Volumnia is pleased as well.

She sits, watching the events unfold on TV.

The sound of the cheering fades as we go to...

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INT. MENENIUS' LIMO - DAY

The limousine winds through the pedestrian traffic toward the Roman marketplace.

Coriolanus sits with Menenius. Coriolanus is both angry and embarrassed. He is wearing a sharp business suit.

MENENIUS
Have you not known
The worthiest men have done it?

CORIOLANUS
(agrees)
Custom calls me to it.
What custom wills, in all things should
we do...
What must I say?
"Look, sir, my wounds.
I got them in my country's service."

MENENIUS
O me, the gods!
You must not speak like that. You must
desire them
To think upon you--

CORIOLANUS
"Think upon me"? Hang 'em!
I would they would forget me.

MENENIUS
You'll mar all!

The limo stops. They are at the marketplace. The moment has come.

Menenius takes a breath. Urges calm:

MENENIUS
Pray you, speak to them, I pray you,
In wholesome manner.

CORIOLANUS
(sourly)
Bid them wash their faces
And keep their teeth clean.

He leaves the car.

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EXT. MARKETPLACE - DAY

The commercial heart of Rome. A large town square, since antiquity used as a marketplace.

But now it is filled with tatty stalls selling cheap purses and knock-off watches. Paltry fruit stands alongside shabby souvenir stalls.

Advertising billboards surround and pollute the square -- SONY. COKE. NIKE. MCDONALDS -- obscuring any classical architecture that might have survived.

Tamora and Cassius, the political activists, are in the crowd. They watch closely.

Coriolanus slowly walks to the center of the marketplace. He stands, feeling ridiculous and not at all humble.

He looks around.

Waiting for something to happen.

The CUSTOMERS and SHOPKEEPERS just look back at him. Some are curious. Some are amused. Some hostile and most indifferent.

But no one approaches.

Then Coriolanus understands. He must go to them: beg for votes.

He prepares himself and then slowly moves through the various stalls, weaving in and out. Trying to maintain his dignity.

He sees the Citizens from before and goes to them. We glimpse Brutus and Sicinius amongst the crowd.

CORIOLANUS
(to Cassius)
You know the cause, sir, of my standing here.

CASSIUS
We do, sir. Tell us what hath brought you to it.

CORIOLANUS
Mine own desert.

TAMORA
Your own desert?

CORIOLANUS
Ay, but not mine own desire.

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TAMORA
How not your own desire?

CORIOLANUS
No, it was never my desire yet to trouble the poor with begging.

CASSIUS
You must think, if we give you anything, we hope to gain by you.

CORIOLANUS
Well then, I pray, your price of the Consulship?

WAR VET
The price is to ask it kindly.

CORIOLANUS
Kindly, sir, I pray, let me have it. I have wounds to show you, which shall be yours in private ... Your good voice, sir. What say you?

WAR VET
(impressed)
You shall have it, worthy sir.

CORIOLANUS
A match, sir. There's in all two worthy voices begged. I have your alms. Adieu.

Business done, so he thinks, Coriolanus crisply moves on.

Cassius is not convinced.

CASSIUS
But this is something odd.

Coriolanus continues on. He sees a large JAMAICAN WOMAN with her CHILDREN, carrying plastic grocery bags, talking to a SHOPKEEPER. He goes to them:

CORIOLANUS
Pray you now, if it may stand with the tune of your voices that I may be Consul.

JAMAICAN WOMAN
You have deserved nobly of your country, and you have not deserved nobly.

CORIOLANUS
Your enigma?

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JAMAICAN WOMAN
You have been a scourge to her enemies; you have been a rod to her friends ... You have not indeed loved the common people.

CORIOLANUS
You should account me the more virtuous that I have not been common in my love ... Therefore, beseech you, I may be Consul.

SHOPKEEPER
We hope to find you our friend, and therefore give you our voices heartily.

JAMAICAN WOMAN
You have received many wounds for your country.

CORIOLANUS
I will not seal your knowledge with showing them. I will make much of your voices, and so trouble you no farther.

JAMAICAN WOMAN
The gods give you joy, sir, heartily!

Coriolanus is warming to the task, it's easier than he thought. He moves to a central, open area and declares publicly:

CORIOLANUS
Your voices! For your voices I have fought;
Watched for your voices; for your voices bear
Of wounds two dozen odd; battles thrice six
I have seen and heard of!

A crowd is gathering. We note Brutus and Sicinius in the crowd. Menenius, too, has moved in.

CORIOLANUS
For your voices
Have done many things, some less, some more.
Your voices! Indeed, I would be Consul.

WAR VET
He has done nobly, and cannot go without any honest man's voice!

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RACE TRACK TOUT
Therefore let him be Consul!

JAMAICAN WOMAN
The gods give him joy, and make him good friend to the people!

The Citizens applaud and give their support:

CITIZENS
Amen, amen. God save thee, noble Consul!

CORIOLANUS
Worthy voices!

Menenius, with Brutus and Sicinius, goes to him:

MENENIUS
You have stood your limitation, and the Tribunes
Endue you with the people's voice.

CORIOLANUS
Is this done?

SICINIUS
The custom of request you have discharged.
The people do admit you, and are summoned
To meet anon upon your approbation.

CORIOLANUS
Where? At the Senate?

SICINIUS
There, Coriolanus.

MENENIUS
I'll keep you company.
(to Brutus)
Will you along?

BRUTUS
(declines)
We stay here for the people.

Coriolanus and Menenius go, relieved the trial is over.

Brutus and Sicinius, however, have work to do. This has not gone as they wanted. They are urgent:

SICINIUS
How now, my masters! Have you chose this man?

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CASSIUS
(ruefully)
He has our voices, sir.

BRUTUS
We pray the gods he may deserve your loves.

TAMORA
Amen, sir. To my poor unworthy notice,
He mocked us when he begged our voices.

CASSIUS
Certainly
He flouted us downright.

JAMAICAN WOMAN
No, it is his kind of speech; he did not mock us.

TAMORA
(sharply)
He should have showed us
His marks of merit, wounds received for's country.

SICINIUS
Why, so he did, I am sure.

TAMORA
No, no! No one saw them!

CASSIUS
(inciting the crowd)
Was not this mockery?

Brutus presses hard:

BRUTUS
When he had no power,
But was a petty servant to the state,
He was your enemy, ever spake against
Your liberties.

SICINIUS
Did you perceive
He did solicit you in free contempt
When he did need your loves, and do you think
That his contempt shall not be bruising to you
When he hath power to crush?

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Cassius and Tamora carefully lead the crowd in expressing growing alarm and resistance to Coriolanus:

CASSIUS
He's not confirmed; we may deny him yet!

TAMORA
And will deny him!
I'll have five hundred voices of that sound.

CASSIUS
I twice five hundred and their friends!

The crowd roars approval. A frightening, animal sound.

SICINIUS
Let them assemble,
And on a safer judgment all revoke
Your ignorant election.

BRUTUS
Enforce his pride,
And his old hate unto you!

SICINIUS
And presently, when you have drawn your number,
Repair to the Capitol.

CASSIUS
We will so!

TAMORA
We will so! All
Repent in their election!

Cassius and Tamora lead the crowd. It is a terrifying spectacle of sudden mob rage, only a razor-thin edge to violence.

Brutus and Sicinius watch, satisfied, like Robespierre and Saint Just looking over the bloody guillotine.

INT. SENATE-CORRIDOR - DAY

Coriolanus, dressed again in his familiar uniform, emerges from an antechamber with his comrade Titus.

Menenius, General Cominius and several pro-Coriolanus Senators follow them. They stride down the corridor.

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CORIOLANUS
(to Titus)
Tullus Aufidius then has assembled a new army?

TITUS
He has, my lord.

CORIOLANUS
Saw you Aufidius?

TITUS
He is retired to Antium.

CORIOLANUS
Spoke he of me?

TITUS
He did, my lord.

CORIOLANUS
How? What?

TITUS
How often he had met you, sword to sword;
That of all things upon the earth he hated
Your person most.

CORIOLANUS
At Antium lives he?

TITUS
At Antium.

CORIOLANUS
I wish I had a cause to seek him there,
To oppose his hatred fully.

They hear the growing rumble of a crowd. Curious.

They continue on and turn a corner to...

INT. SENATE-CENTRAL LOBBY - DAY

The central lobby of the Senate is an open, airy space.

Through the glass doors at the front of the lobby an unruly crowd can be seen gathering. Police. Barricades.

Sicinius and Brutus are waiting to intercept them.

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CORIOLANUS
(to Titus)
Behold, these are the Tribunes of the people,
The tongues of the common mouth.

SICINIUS
Pass no further.

CORIOLANUS
Ha! What is that?

BRUTUS
It will be dangerous to go on. No further.

CORIOLANUS
What makes this change?

MENENIUS
The matter?

COMINIUS
Hath he not passed the nobles and the commons?

BRUTUS
Cominius, no.

Coriolanus steps closer to Brutus. The mob sees him through the glass doors. The tension immediately increases.

CORIOLANUS
Have I had children's voices?

TITUS
Tribunes, give way.

BRUTUS
The people are incensed against him.

CORIOLANUS
(glancing to the growing crowd)
Are these your herd?

MENENIUS
Be calm, be calm.

BRUTUS
The people cry you mocked them, and of late called them
Time-pleasers, flatterers, foes to nobleness.

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CORIOLANUS
But this was known before.

SICINIUS
You show too much of that
For which the people stir. If you will
pass
To where you are bound, you must inquire
your way.

The crowd outside is growing restless, sensing and responding to the building tension. The police try to hold them back, keeping them away from the doors. The crowd presses in.

We see Cassius and Tamora at the forefront, urging the crowd on.

MENENIUS
Let's be calm--

COMINIUS
The people are abused, set on--

MENENIUS
Not now, not now--

TITUS
Not in this heat, sir--

Coriolanus strides angrily toward the doors and exits--

The others follow--

EXT. SENATE-COURTYARD - DAY

Coriolanus launches himself into the crowd with blistering anger:

CORIOLANUS
My nobler friends, I crave their pardons.
For the mutable, rank-scented crowd,
Let them regard me as I do not flatter,
And therein behold themselves. I say
again,
In soothing them, we nourish against our
Senate
The cockle of rebellion, insolence,
sedition,
Which we ourselves have ploughed for,
sowed, and scattered,
By mingling them with us!

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MENENIUS
Well, no more!

TITUS
No more words, we beseech you--

The mob has surrounded them all by now.

The police are getting nervous, eyes darting uneasily from the unruly crowd to the volatile men.

This all has the potential of sparking to violence.

We note a TV news crew moving into position, covering the action. Others film with cell phone cameras. *We intercut some of this footage.*

BRUTUS
(to Coriolanus, provoking)
You speak of the people
As if you were a god to punish, not
A man of their infirmity.

SICINIUS
It were well we let the people know it.

CORIOLANUS
Were I as patient as the midnight sleep,
By Jove, it would be my mind!

SICINIUS
It is a mind
That shall remain a poison where it is,
Not poison any further.

CORIOLANUS
(explodes)
"Shall remain"!
Hear you this Triton of the minnows? Mark you
His absolute "shall"?

BRUTUS
Why, should the people give
One that speaks thus their voice?

CORIOLANUS
I'll give my reasons,
More worthier than their voices!

Menenius tries to pull him away, Coriolanus shakes free and continues the attack:

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CORIOLANUS
By Jove himself,
It makes the consuls base; and my soul aches
To know, when two authorities are up,
Neither supreme, how soon confusion,
May enter 'twixt the gap of both and take
The one by the other.

The crowd roars angrily -- Coriolanus spins on them:

CORIOLANUS
Thus we debase the nature of our seats,
and make the rabble
Call our cares fears; which will in time
Break ope the locks of the Senate, and bring in
The crows to peck the eagles!

MENENIUS
Come, enough!

BRUTUS
Enough, with over-measure.

SICINIUS
(calls to the mob)
He has spoken like a traitor, and shall answer
As traitors do!

At the word "traitor" Coriolanus loses all reason, he is fire:

CORIOLANUS
Thou wretch, despite overwhelm thee!

BRUTUS
Manifest treason!

SICINIUS
This is a Consul? No!

CORIOLANUS
Hence, old goat!

Coriolanus grabs Sicinius roughly and flings him aside--

At this -- the crowd ROARS in outrage -- the TV crews hustle for position--

Menenius pulls Coriolanus off:

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MENENIUS
On both sides more respect!

SICINIUS
(calling to the crowd)
Here's he that would take from you all
your power!

The crowd reacts angrily -- surging forward against the restraint of the police.

We see grim RIOT POLICE marching into position. The crowd is not intimidated, they are spoiling for a fight.

The Tribunes provoke the crowd even more, escalating and building the fever:

BRUTUS
You are at point to lose your liberties!
Martius would have all from you, Martius,
Whom late you have named for Consul.

SICINIUS
What is the city but the people?!

TAMORA
True! The people are the city!

SICINIUS
We do here pronounce, upon the part of
the people,
Martius is worthy of present DEATH!

A huge roar from the mob. Panic and violence building. Fast and overlapping:

BRUTUS
Guards, seize him!

CORIOLANUS
No, I'll die here!

BRUTUS
Lay hands upon him!

SICINIUS
(to the crowd)
HELP, YE CITIZENS!

At his cue--

The civil violence threatened from the opening moments of this story finally EXPLODES--

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With Cassius and Tamora in the forefront, the crowd attacks the police--

Riot Police march in, slamming ahead with riot shields and truncheons--

The mob fights back with anything at hand -- some are armed with clubs and knives, others snatch up garbage cans and newspaper vending machines, throwing them, smashing windows, battling the police, kicking and punching and screaming--

It is civil disobedience. But it is also drunken, thug violence. Terrifying in its intensity--

Menenius gets Titus and Cominius to hustle Coriolanus away--

MENENIUS
Go, get you to your house! Be gone, away!
All will be naught else--

COMINIUS
Come, sir, along with us--

They hurry Coriolanus away--

The Riot Police, outnumbered, start firing TEAR GAS into the crowd--

Screams--

TV news crew filming--

Chaotic, flurried violence--

Shaky TV images, cell phone video--

Choking, acrid gas--

It is a terrifying descent into public madness as all order breaks down.

Rome is bloody.

INT. SENATE-OFFICE - DUSK

Menenius and the Tribunes are gathered in a darkened office for some high-stakes politicking.

Tamora, her face bloody from the riot, is with them. So too some supporters on either side.

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MENENIUS
(urgently)
As I do know the Consul's worthiness,
So can I name his faults--

SICINIUS
Consul! What Consul?

MENENIUS
The Consul Coriolanus.

BRUTUS
He Consul?!

SICINIUS
It is decreed
He dies tonight.

TAMORA
He's a disease that must be cut away.

MENENIUS
O, he's a limb that has but a disease:
Mortal, to cut it off; to cure it, easy.
What has he done to Rome that's worth his death? Eh?
Killing our enemies?!

He sees that his words are having some effect, he presses the point:

MENENIUS
The blood he hath lost --
He dropped it <u>for</u> <u>his</u> <u>country</u>.

Some in the room murmur agreement.

BRUTUS
We'll hear no more--

MENENIUS
Consider this: he has been bred in the wars
Since he could draw a sword, and is ill schooled
In graceful language ... Give me leave,
I'll go to him, and undertake to bring him
Where he shall answer by a lawful form,
In peace, to his utmost peril.

PRO-CORIOLANUS SENATOR
Noble tribunes,
It is the humane way.

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ANOTHER SENATOR
The other course
Will prove too bloody, and the end of it
Unknown to the beginning.

Sicinius is about to retort when Brutus stops him.

Brutus assents, assuming the voice of reason:

BRUTUS
Be you then as the people's officer.

Menenius and Coriolanus' supporters are relieved.

BRUTUS
If you bring not Martius, we'll proceed
In our first way.

MENENIUS
I'll bring him to you.

He goes quickly.

Brutus turns to Sicinius and Tamora and begins to quietly explain his plan.

INT. MARTIUS VILLA-CORRIDOR - DAY

Coriolanus strides angrily down a long corridor, in and out of shafts of light, seething to Titus:

CORIOLANUS
Let them pull all about mine ears,
present me
Death on the wheel or at wild horses'
heels,
Yet will I still be thus to them--!

TITUS
Martius--

CORIOLANUS
(continuing unabated)
I muse my mother
Does not approve me further!

He slams through a door to the living room...

INT. VILLA -- LIVING ROOM - DAY

... And stomps to confront his mother, who is currently conspiring with Menenius and a few Senators.

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CORIOLANUS
(to Volumnia, angrily)
I talk of you!
Why did you wish me milder? Would you have me
False to my nature? Rather say I play
The man I am!

She is equally tough with him, not giving an inch, snapping right back:

VOLUMNIA
O, sir, sir, sir,
I would have had you put your power well on,
Before you had worn it out.

CORIOLANUS
Let go!

VOLUMNIA
You might have been enough the man you are,
With striving less to be so!

CORIOLANUS
Let them hang!

VOLUMNIA
Ay, and burn too!

Her outraged fury matches his. Overpowers his.

MENENIUS
(to Coriolanus)
Come, come, you have been too rough, something too rough.
You must return and mend it.

Coriolanus turns away.

VOLUMNIA
Pray, be counseled.
I have a heart as little apt as yours,
But yet a brain that leads my use of anger
To better vantage.

MENENIUS
Well said, noble woman!

CORIOLANUS
What must I do?

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MENENIUS
Return to the Tribunes.

CORIOLANUS
Well, what then? What then?

MENENIUS
Repent what you have spoke.

CORIOLANUS
For them? I cannot do it to the gods.
Must I then do it to them?

VOLUMNIA
You are too absolute,
Though therein you can never be too
noble.

CORIOLANUS
(upset, walking away)
Why force you this?

She pursues him:

VOLUMNIA
Because that now it lies you on to speak
To the people, not by your own
instruction,
Nor by the matter which your heart
prompts you,
But with such words that are but
rehearsed in
Your tongue, though but bastards and
syllables
Of no allowance to your bosom's truth...

She moves closer to him. Her voice lower. A sort of seduction.

VOLUMNIA
I would dissemble with my nature where
My fortunes and my friends at stake
required
I should do so in honor...

She is very close now. Whispering. She touches him gently, like a lover.

VOLUMNIA
I am in this your wife, your son,
These senators, the nobles ...
And you.

A long beat. All are silent, watching her spin her web.

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VOLUMNIA
I prithee now, my son,
Go and say to them
Thou art their soldier, and being bred in broils
Has not the soft way
In asking their good loves; but thou wilt frame
Thyself, forsooth, hereafter theirs.

MENENIUS
This but done, even as she speaks,
Why their hearts were yours.

VOLUMNIA
Prithee now,
Go, and be ruled...
(laughing to him)
Although I know thou hadst rather
Follow thine enemy in a fiery gulf
Than flatter him in a bower.

Coriolanus smiles. A genuinely sweet moment between them.

Cominius enters with several other political supporters.

COMINIUS
Sir, it is fit
You make strong party, or defend yourself
By calmness or by absence. All's in anger.

MENENIUS
Only fair speech.

COMINIUS
I think it will serve, if he
Can thereto frame his spirit.

VOLUMNIA
He must -- and will.
(to Coriolanus)
Prithee now, say you will, and go about it.

CORIOLANUS
Must I
With base tongue give my noble heart
A lie that it must bear? ... Well, I will do it.

But he is still agitated. Volumnia shares a concerned glance with Menenius.

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CORIOLANUS
(bitterly)
Away, my disposition, and possess me
Some harlot's spirit. A beggar's tongue
Make motion through my lips, and my armed knees,
Who bowed but in my stirrup, bend like his
That hath charity received!

The thought of begging is too much, he rejects it, breaking away:

CORIOLANUS
I will not do it!
Lest I cease to honor mine own truth
And by my body's action teach my mind
A most inherent baseness.

Volumnia snarls at him, exasperated, building to a thunder that dwarfs his:

VOLUMNIA
At thy choice, then!
To beg of thee, it is my more dishonor
Than thou of them. Come all to ruin! Let
Thy mother rather feel thy pride than fear
Thy dangerous stoutness, for I mock at death
With as big heart as thou! Do as you like!

The words echo.

It is as if he has been slapped. His resolve vanishes.

CORIOLANUS
Pray, be content...
Mother, I am going, chide me no more.

He awaits her approval.

She will not yet grant it.

CORIOLANUS
Look, I am going...
Commend me to my wife. I'll return Consul,
Or never trust to what my tongue can do
In the way of flattery further.

She graciously bows to him.

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VOLUMNIA
Do your will.

Then she kisses him.

And she goes.

Like a queen. Volumnia triumphant. Always.

Then a shocking hard cut to:

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

A crowded TV studio. The audience stands are filling up. Television cameras. Lights. Heavy security.

On the stage: the set for a chat show. Translight of a city skyline behind the set. Two standing microphones.

At the side of the set, Sicinius and Brutus are conspiring with the two citizen activists, Cassius and Tamora:

BRUTUS
(to Sicinius)
In this point charge him home: that he affects
Tyrannical power. If he evade us there,
Enforce him with his envy to the people.

SICINIUS
(to Tamora)
Have you a catalogue
Of all the voices that we have procured
Set down by the poll?

TAMORA
I have; it's ready.

SICINIUS
When the people hear me say "It shall be so
In the right and strength of the Commons," be it either
For death, for fine, or banishment, then let them,
If I say "Fine," cry "Fine!" - if "Death," cry "Death!"

TAMORA
We shall inform them.

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Cassius and Tamora hurry off to instruct and manipulate the crowd as best they can. They mix with the audience in the stands.

Meanwhile--

A gloomy but resolved Coriolanus walks with Cominius and Menenius between the tiers of audience, on the way to the set.

COMINIUS
Arm yourself
To answer mildly, for they are prepared
With accusations, as I hear, more strong
Than are upon you yet.

CORIOLANUS
The word is "mildly." Pray you, let us go.
Let them accuse me by invention, I
Will answer in mine honor.

MENENIUS
Ay, but mildly.

CORIOLANUS
Well, mildly be it then. Mildly!

Coriolanus steels himself as they emerge from between the stands and head toward the set.

TV news crews are waiting. Blinding lights snap on.

The crowd, on seeing Coriolanus, lets out a ROAR. Deafening and savage.

We see Cassius and Tamora moving through the crowd, instigating, convincing, imploring.

Coriolanus ignores it all. Imperious to the end.

Brutus and Sicinius wait on the set.

BRUTUS
(whispers to Sicinius)
Put him to choler straight.

Coriolanus and his supporters move to the stage. Coriolanus glares at the Tribunes. The TV crews take up position.

Menenius gestures for Coriolanus to step to the microphone, whispering to him:

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MENENIUS
Calmly, I do beseech you.

Coriolanus steps to the microphone.

Brutus gestures for the crowd to quiet down.

We see bits of this scene through the monitors on the TV cameras.

When the crowd is silent, Coriolanus begins to make a rehearsed speech:

CORIOLANUS
The honored gods--

But his voice echoes badly with reverb. Menenius adjusts the microphone. Coriolanus begins again, quickly and by rote:

CORIOLANUS
The honored gods
Keep Rome in safety, and the chairs of justice
Supplied with worthy men. Plant love among us.
Throng our large temples with the shows of peace,
And not our streets with war.

COMINIUS
Amen, amen.

MENENIUS
A noble wish.

His boilerplate speech over, Coriolanus turns to Sicinius who is at the other standing microphone:

CORIOLANUS
Shall I be charged no further than this present?
Must all determine here?

SICINIUS
I do demand,
If you submit you to the people's voices.

CORIOLANUS
I am content.

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INT. VILLA -- LIVING ROOM - DAY

Volumnia watches the proceedings closely on TV. She is pleased with her son's performance so far.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

Menenius, ever the People's Friend, steps to the microphone:

MENENIUS
Lo, citizens, he says he is content.
The warlike service he has done,
consider; think
Upon the wounds his body bears, which
show
Like graves in the holy churchyard.

CORIOLANUS
(uncomfortable with this)
Scratches with briers,
Scars to move laughter only.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Aufidius sits with several of his officers, leaning forward, watching the drama unfold on TV.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

MENENIUS
Consider further,
That when he speaks not like a citizen,
You find him like a soldier. Do not take
His rougher accents for malicious sounds,
But, as I say, such as become a soldier.

Coriolanus cuts in, his impatience getting the better of him:

CORIOLANUS
What is the matter
That being passed for Consul with full
voice,
I am so dishonored that the very hour
You take it off again?

SICINIUS
We charge you that you have contrived to
take
From Rome all seasoned office, and to
wind
Yourself into a power tyrannical ...
(MORE)

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SICINIUS (cont'd)
(the coup de grace)
For which you are a traitor to the people.

Coriolanus responds, a cobra striking:

CORIOLANUS
How? Traitor?!

MENENIUS
(alarmed)
Nay, temperately! Your promise.

CORIOLANUS
The fires in the lowest hell fold in the people!
Call me their traitor, thou injurious Tribune!

SICINIUS
(calling)
Mark you this, people?!

The crowd responds, egged on by Cassius and Tamora. A murmur of voices, a chant growing, "Traitor ... traitor ... traitor..."

Brutus cleverly plays the reasonable voice, knowing his words will further rile Coriolanus:

BRUTUS
But since he hath
Served well for Rome--

CORIOLANUS
(snaps)
What do you prate of service?

BRUTUS
I talk of that, that know it.

CORIOLANUS
You?! ...
I'll know no further.
Let them pronounce death, exile,
Flaying, pent to linger
But with a grain a day - I would not buy
Their mercy at the price of one fair word!

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INT. VILLA -- LIVING ROOM - DAY

Volumnia watches, alarmed now. She knows this rage will prove to be disastrous for her son.

INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

Sicinius seizes the moment to destroy Coriolanus, barking into the microphone:

SICINIUS
In the name of the people
And in the power of us the Tribunes, we,
Even from this instant, banish him our city!
In the people's name,
I say ... IT SHALL BE SO!

Well-rehearsed by Cassius and Tamora, many in the crowd respond with a fierce cry:

CROWD
It shall be so! It shall be so! Let him away!

TAMORA
He's banished! IT SHALL BE SO!

CROWD
It shall be so! It shall be so! It shall be so...!

Cassius and Tamora keep the crowd at a fever pitch--

They keep chanting and railing--

A building seismic rumble--

COMINIUS
(stepping forward)
Hear me, my masters, and my common friends--!

SICINIUS
He's sentenced. No more hearing.

COMINIUS
Let me speak!

The crowd's fury is building--

It is all about to erupt--

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BRUTUS
There's no more to be said, but he is banished
As enemy to the people and his country.
IT SHALL BE SO!

CROWD
It shall be so! It shall be so! It shall be so...!

And then--

Coriolanus explodes--

His rage is volcanic--

He SLAMS the standing microphone away--

His dragon's ROAR silences the entire studio--

CORIOLANUS
YOU COMMON CRY OF CURS!

A collective intake of breath--

The crowd is stunned--

CORIOLANUS
Whose breath I hate
As reek of the rotten fens, whose loves I prize
As the dead carcasses of unburied men
That do corrupt my air...
(each word an attack)
I ... BANISH ... YOU!

The crowd is silent. No one dares to even breathe.

AT THE VILLA: Volumnia watches, frozen, breathless.

IN THE APARTMENT: Aufidius stands, riveted.

BACK IN THE STUDIO:

CORIOLANUS
Here remain with your uncertainty.
Let every feeble rumor shake your hearts!
Your enemies, with nodding of their plumes,
Fan you into despair! Have the power still
To banish your defenders, till at length
Your ignorance - which finds not till it feels,
(MORE)

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CORIOLANUS (cont'd)
Making but reservation of yourselves;
Still your own foes - deliver you
As most abated captives to some nation
That won you without blows!

A beat.

The TV cameras hum. The crowd is silent.

Menenius and the others watch in amazement.

Coriolanus slowly takes one last, long look at the people of Rome.

Then:

CORIOLANUS
Despising,
For you, the city, thus I turn my back.

He turns and slowly walks toward one of the tunnels leading from the studio.

The crowd follows every step with their eyes.

He stops.

Turns back.

Steel.

CORIOLANUS
There is a world elsewhere.

And he goes down the tunnel.

Disappearing from view.

A silent beat.

Then, a chilling cry of absolutely Jacobin bloodlust from the stands:

TAMORA
The people's enemy is gone!

The crowd SCREAMS their approval.

The SAVAGE CRY echoes around the studio.

The echoing roar takes us to...

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EXT. WASTELAND CHECKPOINT - DAWN

The outskirts of Rome are an urban wasteland. Abandoned factories. Rusting cars. Overgrown vacant lots. Collapsing advertising billboards.

There is a lonely gas station in the distance, its neon sign glowing a lurid green in the gray dawn light.

We are at a Roman checkpoint on the highway into the city. A guardhouse and barrier. Some barbed wire barricades. Bored soldiers.

Several cars pull up to the checkpoint. Two Roman security SUVs. Menenius' familiar limousine. And Volumnia's enormous Bentley.

Security Guards climb out of their vehicle, light cigarettes and chat with the soldiers manning the checkpoint. Menenius, Titus and Cominius climb from Menenius' limousine.

INT. VOLUMNIA'S BENTLEY - DAWN

Meanwhile, inside the Bentley, Coriolanus is comforting his wife and mother:

CORIOLANUS
(to Virgilia)
Come, leave your tears. A brief farewell.
The beast
With many heads butts me away.

VIRGILIA
O heavens ... O heavens ...

Volumnia has tears in her eyes as well. Coriolanus is surprisingly unsentimental and tough with her:

CORIOLANUS
Nay, mother,
Where is your ancient courage?

VOLUMNIA
Now the red pestilence strike all trades
in Rome,
And occupations perish!

CORIOLANUS
Nay, mother, I shall be loved when I am
lacked.

She nods to him, she has regained her composure.

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Only then do they climb from the car.

EXT. WASTELAND CHECKPOINT - DAWN

Coriolanus takes his leave:

CORIOLANUS
(embracing Titus)
Bid me farewell.

TITUS
Farewell, Martius.

CORIOLANUS
(embracing Cominius)
Cominius, droop not, adieu.
I'll do well yet.

He goes to Menenius, who is genuinely distraught. For all his political machinations, he truly cares for Coriolanus.

Coriolanus is moved to see Menenius so emotional.

CORIOLANUS
Thou old and true Menenius,
Thy tears are salter than a younger
man's,
And venomous to thine eyes.

MENENIUS
(deeply)
If I could shake off but seven years
I'd go with thee every foot.

They embrace.

Then Coriolanus knows it is time to go. He picks up a traveling bag and slings it over his shoulder.

Looks back at his friends and family.

A beat.

A certain darkness creeps into his expression. An ominous resolve.

CORIOLANUS
You shall hear from me still.

He turns and looks to the distance.

Miles and miles of wasteland and desolation.

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His future.

CORIOLANUS
I go alone,
Like to a lonely dragon.

He strides off.

The soldiers manning the checkpoint raise the barrier.

Coriolanus walks under it. And begins walking down the long highway away from Rome.

The only sound is the cold, lonely moan of the wind.

We fade to...

EXT./INT. EXILE SEQUENCE - DAY/NIGHT

Coriolanus' exile.

We see his long odyssey. It is a grueling physical journey -- and also something of a spiritual challenge. He is solitary and without comfort: vulnerable to the elements and also to the demons of his own psyche.

We see him as...

He walks along the barren highway. Trash piled along the road. A car zooms past. Whoosh. He is lost in dust...

Blazing heat, like a furnace, as he trudges over desert terrain. Burning oil wells blacken the sky in the distance...

Isolated, within himself, as he walks past the detritus of war ... a burned out tank ... a mountain of rusted artillery shells ... skeletons bleached in the sun...

His clothes are dusty and dirty now. A sandstorm. He wraps a scarf around his head, like a burnoose. Only his eyes visible now...

A gypsy boy in tattered clothing riding a white horse passes him. The boy looks at him intently as he passes...

We get a sense of him moving into different terrain, up into a mountain range, climbing...

Then descending. Pouring rain. Lightning sparking. He is almost a Romantic figure now. Byronic. Wrapped in a cloak against the wildness of nature; the chiaroscuro flashes of light illuminating his haunted eyes...

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We end at...

EXT. OUTSIDE ANTIUM - NIGHT

Coriolanus stands. Like a statue. All his life in his blazing eyes. He is staring at a small town in the distance.

We see a sign: ANTIUM.

His destination since he began. The home of his nemesis, the hated Aufidius.

He begins to walk to the town.

INT. POLITICO BAR - DAY

Meanwhile, back in Rome, Brutus and Sicinius are having lunch at their usual hangout.

They see Volumnia entering the restaurant, pulling Virgilia after her. An ambush. She heads toward the Tribunes.

Volumnia's eyes have the grim intensity of a predator. She looks strangely wild.

BRUTUS
Here comes his mother.

SICINIUS
(prepares to go)
Let's not meet her. They say she's mad.

Volumnia stalks up to them:

VOLUMNIA
O, you're well met. The hoarded plague of the gods
Requite your love!

The Tribunes try to leave, she won't let them:

VOLUMNIA
Will you be gone?

VIRGILIA
You shall stay too. I would I had the power
To say so to my husband.

SICINIUS
Are you mad?

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VOLUMNIA
Ay, fool, is that a shame? Note but this, fool:
Hadst thou craft
To banish him that struck more blows for Rome
Than thou hast spoken words?

SICINIUS
(trying to escape)
O blessed heavens...

Volumnia is creating a scene. Heads are turning.

She continues her attack on Sicinius, but is distracted and jumbled:

VOLUMNIA
More noble blows than ever thou wise words,
And for Rome's good. I'll tell thee what -
Yet go--
Nay -- but thou shalt stay too -- I would my son
Were in Arabia, and thy tribe before him,
His good sword in his hand.

SICINIUS
What then?

VIRGILIA
What then?
He'd make an end of thy posterity.

VOLUMNIA
Bastards and all.

Menenius has entered the bar, seeing the trouble he goes to them, tries to calm Volumnia:

MENENIUS
Come, come, peace...

BRUTUS
Pray, let us go.

He tries to leave the bar. Volumnia stops him for final attack, something like a curse in its power:

VOLUMNIA
Now, pray, sir, get you gone.
You have done a brave deed. Ere you go, hear this:
(grabs Virgilia)
(MORE)

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VOLUMNIA (cont'd)
This lady's husband here, this, do you see?!--
Whom you have banished, does exceed you all.

BRUTUS
Well, well, we'll leave you.

SICINIUS
Why stay we to be baited
With one that wants her wits?

VOLUMNIA
I would the gods had nothing else to do
But to confirm my curses!

Menenius gently restrains Volumnia and the Tribunes finally escape the bar.

Volumnia takes a breath, controls herself.

VOLUMNIA
Could I meet 'em
But once a day, it would unclog my heart
Of what lies heavy to it.

MENENIUS
You have told them home;
And, by my troth, you have cause. You'll sup with me?

She turns to him. A cold and killing fire in her eyes.

VOLUMNIA
Anger's my meat. I sup upon myself,
And so shall starve with feeding.

She takes Virgilia's hand and drags her out.

Menenius watches. Saddened.

Once proud Volumnia, reduced to this.

EXT. ANTIUM - NIGHT

Antium is an old Volscian city gone to seed. It is Latin in flavor, something like Havana.

There is life to the place, a certain humid vitality. Someone is singing in a bar. Old men are playing dominos on a patio. Flickering TV and radio babel from terraced apartment buildings.

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Coriolanus, his face still shrouded in the burnoose, like a Hamas soldier, moves through the streets.

He takes in the life of the town as he walks. Studying the faces of the Volscians around him.

Coriolanus sees a heavily-guarded apartment building at the end of the street. Jeeps and SOLDIERS.

Coriolanus approaches with stealth, moving in and out of shadows along the street, ducking into doorways and alleys, taking advantage of the darkness.

He stops. Steps into the shadows. For he sees...

Aufidius.

Walking with a few of his officers.

Aufidius is beloved in Antium. He has an easy manner with the people. He stops and chats. Laughs with them. He dances for a moment with a little girl.

Coriolanus watches from the shadows, his expression complex. There is real envy ... Aufidius has such a comfortable way with the common people, he's natural, unaffected.

Aufidius jokes with the little girl's parents for a moment and then moves on.

Coriolanus watches Aufidius and his men go into an apartment building.

He scans the building with the eye of a Special Forces soldier. He sees that the soldiers guarding the building are bored, it is perfunctory work.

Two YOUNG WOMEN, perhaps hookers, move past the front of the building, flirting with the soldiers. The soldiers call and whistle to them, delighted.

Coriolanus uses this distraction to slip into the shadows behind the soldiers and sneak into the building...

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING-CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Coriolanus moves again with stealth, heading toward what is clearly the center of the action: a noisy room on the second floor.

The doorway is guarded by two serious GUARDS. These are not the bored soldiers out front, these are grim and intense warriors.

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Coriolanus considers his course.

Decides. Takes a breath. Focuses.

He is like ice now.

He moves--

A steady stride--

He walks right up to the Guards--

Before they can even respond--

He punches one HARD in the throat -- the Guard recoils, gasping for air--

Simultaneously, Coriolanus SLAMS his other hand violently over the entire face of the second Guard -- grabbing his face firmly and SHOVING him back into the door--

So hard that the door slams aside--

And Coriolanus shoves the Guard into--

INT. AUFIDIUS' CHAMBER - NIGHT

Aufidius is having dinner with some of his men, their wives and some children--

The soldiers bolt up, upsetting the table, smashing dishes -- pulling guns -- alarmed--

As Coriolanus powers in, still holding the second Guard by the face--

He flings the Guard aside--

Aufidius and his men, all pointing weapons at Coriolanus, are stunned.

A long beat.

Coriolanus' face is still masked by the burnoose. Only his cold eyes are visible.

AUFIDIUS
Whence comes thou? What wouldst thou? Thy name?

Coriolanus does not respond.

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Aufidius is growing uneasy. His men are tense, ready to open fire at any second.

AUFIDIUS
Speak, man! What's thy name?

CORIOLANUS
A name unmusical to the Volscians' ears,
And harsh in sound to thine.

The other Guard from outside, and several other soldiers, rush in. Weapons drawn, surrounding Coriolanus.

He doesn't move a muscle.

Aufidius, intrigued by the stranger's courage, waves his men off.

AUFIDIUS
Say, what's thy name?
Thou has a grim appearance ...What's thy name?

CORIOLANUS
Know'st thou me yet?

AUFIDIUS
I know thee not ... Thy name?

Finally, Coriolanus removes his burnoose. His face is exposed. The Volscians are stunned.

CORIOLANUS
My name is Caius Martius, who hath done
To thee particularly and to all the Volsces
Great hurt and mischief; thereto witness may
My surname ... Coriolanus.

The Volscians look to Aufidius, very nervous, unsure how to proceed. Aufidius just stares back at Coriolanus, staggered.

CORIOLANUS
Only that name remains.

Aufidius doesn't understand. Coriolanus explains:

CORIOLANUS
The cruelty and envy of the people,
Who have all forsook me, hath devoured the rest,
And suffered me by the voice of slaves to be
(MORE)

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CORIOLANUS (cont'd)
Whooped out of Rome. Now this extremity
Hath brought me to thy hearth, not out of hope -
Mistake me not - to save my life; for if
I had feared death, of all the men in the world
I would have avoided thee, but in mere spite,
To be full quit of those my banishers,
Stand I before thee here.

Coriolanus dares to take a step toward Aufidius--

The Volscians react. Guns are raised, fingers tight on triggers, an instant from opening fire--

Coriolanus carefully holds out his arms. He's unarmed.

Aufidius nods to his men. They hold their fire.

Coriolanus slowly crosses the room toward Aufidius. Step by step. Their eyes are locked. Nothing else in the world exists.

CORIOLANUS
I will fight
Against my cankered country with the spleen
Of all the under fiends. But if thou
Dares not this, then I present
My throat to thee and to thy ancient malice...

Coriolanus stops right in front of Aufidius and slowly, carefully, undoes his collar. Exposing his naked throat.

Bending back his head.

Ready for execution.

CORIOLANUS
... Which not to cut would show thee but a fool,
Since I have ever followed thee with hate,
And cannot live but to thy shame unless
It be to do thee service.

A long beat.

Aufidius stares at Coriolanus.

The Volscians watch, eyes wide, too tense to do anything now.

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Aufidius just continues to stare at Coriolanus.

Eyes locked.

Coriolanus blinks some sweat from his eyes. This tiny, human response sparks something in Aufidius.

AUFIDIUS
O Martius ... Martius ...
Each word thou hast spoke hath weeded
from my heart
A root of ancient envy.

He offers his hand.

Coriolanus takes it. Aufidius continues to hold him by the hand, rather intensely, speaking low:

AUFIDIUS
Let me twine
Mine arms about that body.

He embraces Coriolanus.

Aufidius' men finally relax. Weapons are lowered. Relieved glances exchanged.

Some of the Volscians, though, are clearly suspicious of Coriolanus. They watch Aufidius and Coriolanus, concerned.

Aufidius still can't quite believe his ancient enemy is now his newest ally.

AUFIDIUS
Know thou
I loved the maid I married; never man
Sighed truer breath. But that I see thee
here,
Thou noble thing, more dances my rapt
heart
Than when I first my wedded mistress saw
Bestride my threshold.

Coriolanus glances to him, perhaps a little disturbed or embarrassed by the intensity of Aufidius' words.

Aufidius steps away from him, gestures for Coriolanus to sit.

AUFIDIUS
Why, thou Mars, I tell thee,
We have a power on foot, and I had
purpose
Once more to hew thy target from thy
brawn,
(MORE)

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AUFIDIUS (cont'd)
Or lose mine arm for it. Thou hast beat me out
Twelve several times, and I have nightly since
Dreamt of encounters 'twixt thyself and me.

Aufidius continues quietly, almost whispering:

AUFIDIUS
Worthy Martius,
Had we no quarrel else to Rome, but that
Thou art thence banished, we would muster all
From twelve to seventy, and, pouring war
Into the bowels of ungrateful Rome,
Like a bold flood, overbear it.

INT. SHOWER ROOM - NIGHT

Coriolanus sits, naked. He has finally washed off the layers of dirt from his journey.

An old woman is using an electric razor to shave his head.

Aufidius is standing in the doorway to the room. Watching. His eyes move over Coriolanus' body, adding up the scars and wounds.

A pause.

Then Aufidius goes to the old woman. Takes the razor from her. She goes.

Aufidius continues to shave Coriolanus' head himself.

It is a deeply personal act, even intimate ... Yet Aufidius employs the same methodical rhythms as when he was sharpening his knife at the opening of the story.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING-WAR ROOM - NIGHT

The Volscian military command center. Maps, recon photos and radio equipment. Stacks of grenade launchers and arms.

Aufidius' CAPTAINS and AIDES wait alongside some bedraggled Volsce POLITICIANS in ill-fitting suits.

Aufidius ushers Coriolanus in:

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AUFIDIUS
O, come, go in,
And take our friendly senators by the hands.

Coriolanus shakes hands with the politicians:

CORIOLANUS
You bless me, gods.

Then Aufidius takes him to a huge military map laid out on a pool table. Rome and her territories. Strategic markers denote Roman forces and Volscian forces.

AUFIDIUS
Therefore, most absolute sir, if thou wilt have
The leading of thine own revenges, take
The one half of my commission.

The Volscian soldiers and politicos are shocked. Aufidius is giving Coriolanus command of half his forces!

AUFIDIUS
And set down---
As best thou art experienced, since thou knows
Thy country's strength and weakness---thine own ways,
Whether to knock against the gates of Rome,
Or rudely visit them in parts remote,
To fright them ... ere destroy.

Aufidius looks at Coriolanus hard. There it is. The gauntlet is thrown down. Coriolanus will have to completely betray Rome: expose her military weaknesses, tell her secrets.

For all his neurotic intensity, Aufidius is a shrewd man.

Coriolanus nods and turns to the battle map, moving various markers around to show Rome's defensive positions.

Aufidius watches him with Machiavellian calm.

INT. POLITICO BAR - DAY

Several weeks later, back in Rome, politics go on as usual.

Menenius is passing the Tribunes' table. They josh with him:

BRUTUS
Is this Menenius?

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SICINIUS
'Tis he,'tis he! O, he is grown most kind
of late. Hail sir!

MENENIUS
Hail to you both.

SICINIUS
Your Coriolanus
Is not much missed, but with his friends.

MENENIUS
All's well, and might have been much
better if
He could have temporized.

SICINIUS
Where is he, hear you?

MENENIUS
Nay, I hear nothing. His mother and his
wife
Hear nothing from him.

BRUTUS
Caius Martius was
A worthy officer in the war, but
insolent,
Overcome with pride, ambitious past all
thinking,
Self-loving--

MENENIUS
I think not so.

SICINIUS
And Rome sits safe and still without him.

They are distracted when people begin talking loudly, alarmed, at the bar. They hush each other and watch the TV over the bar. Something has happened.

On the TV: a SPECIAL REPORT. Breaking News. A scroll across the bottom of the screen reads “The Volscians On The March?”

TV ANCHORMAN
(on TV)
... Reports the Volsces with two several
powers
Are entered in the Roman territories,
And with the deepest malice of the war
Destroy what lies before them...

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The whole bar is growing quiet now. All watching the TV, which shows grainy indistinct images -- like cell phone pictures -- of troops and tanks.

MENENIUS
'Tis Aufidius,
Who, hearing of our Martius' banishment,
Thrusts forth his horns again into the world.

SICINIUS
(nervous)
Come, what talk you of Martius?

BRUTUS
It cannot be the Volsces dare break with us.

TV ANCHORMAN
(on TV)
The nobles in great earnestness are going
All to the Senate House. Some news is coming
That turns their countenances...
(he listens to his ear piece for a second)
Yes, the first report is seconded, and more,
More fearful, is delivered.

The TV picture switches to a flustered TV REPORTER outside the Senate. A lot of nervous activity behind him.

TV REPORTER
(on TV)
It is spoke freely out of many mouths -
How probable I do not know - that Martius
Has joined with Aufidius--

There is an audible gasp in the bar -- quickly silenced and hushed so all can hear the TV:

TV REPORTER
(on TV)
--He leads a power against Rome,
And vows revenge as spacious as between
The youngest and oldest thing.

Something close to terror on the faces of the politicos. Menenius, without a word, goes.

He does not want to believe this is possible.

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INT. VILLA -- BEDROOM - NIGHT

Virgilia lies on her bed.

On the TV an imbedded WAR CORRESPONDENT is giving an update, intercut with shaky and unclear images of the Volscian army on the move:

TV WAR CORRESPONDENT
(on TV)
A fearful army, led by Caius Martius
Associated with Aufidius, rages
Upon our territories, and have already
Overborne their way, consumed with fire,
and took
What lay before them.

INT. VILLA -- LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Volumnia sits, almost frozen, smoking, watching the TV. Her emotions are deep and dark.

Her son, to her the model of all Roman virtues, has betrayed his country.

TV WAR CORRESPONDENT
(on TV)
Martius has joined with the Volscians -
He is their god. He leads them like
Boys pursuing summer butterflies
Or butchers killing flies.

Close up on Volumnia's face.

She gives away practically nothing.

She takes a slow drag on her cigarette.

EXT. VOLSCIAN CAMP - DAY

Urban industrial wasteland. Old factories and abandoned warehouses. Broken asphalt. Smashed windows.

The Volscians have set up camp here. On the decaying fringes of the city. We see military hardware. Guns. Missile launchers. Armored vehicles.

Soldiers are cleaning weapons, cooking meals, sleeping, playing video games.

Then...

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An incongruous sight...

An old barber chair floats past. Moving across the blue sky. Carried overhead by a group of Volscian soldiers.

But there is something different about these Volscian soldiers. They have altered their uniforms into something pagan and primitive. All have shaved heads. Many have face tattoos or wear striking war paint.

It is like something from LORD OF THE FLIES.

They set the barber chair down outside an abandoned factory. This shattered and abandoned factory is Coriolanus' domain. It is decorated with human skulls.

The CAMP BARBER, a fat man in a greasy butcher's apron, begins to strop his razor.

Hard core young soldiers line up to have their heads shaved. They are Coriolanus' ACOLYTES.

There is no sign of Coriolanus himself.

Aufidius and his LIEUTENANT stand on the fringes, disturbed by the strange cult of personality that has grown up around Coriolanus.

AUFIDIUS
Do they still fly to Coriolanus?

LIEUTENANT
I do not know what witchcraft's in him,
but
Your soldiers use him as the grace before
meat,
Their talk at table, and their thanks at
end.
And you are darkened in this action, sir.

AUFIDIUS
He bears himself more proud,
Even to my person, than I thought he
would
When first I did embrace him.

They turn and walk to the building where Aufidius is quartered:

LIEUTENANT
Sir, I beseech you, think you he'll carry
Rome?

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AUFIDIUS
(grim)
I think he'll be to Rome
As is the osprey to the fish, who takes
it
By sovereignty of nature.

Aufidius nods to the guards outside his quarters and enters with his Lieutenant...

INT. VOLSCIAN CAMP-AUFIDIUS' QUARTERS - DAY

A shattered building. Old graffiti on the walls. Weapons. Maps. Aufidius' gear.

Aufidius sits on his cot, deep in thought.

He pulls a folded bit of paper from his pocket. Carefully and lovingly unfolds it. He has been carrying this paper for months.

We realize it is the glossy magazine cover with the picture of Coriolanus that Aufidius tore out earlier.

He gazes at the picture, his fingers smoothing the paper, tracing the contours of Coriolanus' face...

AUFIDIUS
Whether t'was pride,
Whether defect of judgement,
Or whether nature,
Not to be other than one thing,
Made him feared,
So hated, and so banished.

A beat as he studies the picture.

His lieutenant watches him closely, disturbed by Aufidius' obsession with Coriolanus.

AUFIDIUS
So our virtues
Lie in the interpretation of the time.

He brings the picture closer, whispering now:

AUFIDIUS
One fire drives out one fire; one nail,
one nail;
Rights by rights founder, strengths by
strengths do fail ...
And when, Caius, Rome is thine,
(MORE)

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AUFIDIUS (cont'd)
Thou art poorest of all -- then shortly
art thou mine.

INT. ROMAN WAR ROOM - DAY

Rome is at war now, so the room is busy and tense. Maps and video footage chart the enemy's progress. Soldiers confer urgently outside the door.

Menenius stands with the two Tribunes, Brutus and Sicinius. With them are several SENATORS and GENERALS.

Menenius snaps angrily:

MENENIUS
No, I'll not go!

SICINIUS
(imploring)
Good Menenius--

MENENIUS
Go, you that banished him!
A mile before his tent fall down, and
knee
The way into his mercy.

They stop when Titus enters with General Cominius.

Titus is dusty, has just come from somewhere. He is pale. Truly shaken.

Menenius and the others crowd around him, waiting for his report.

Titus sits, takes a moment to pull himself together, and then reports with the grim severity of a death sentence:

TITUS
He would not seem to know me.

A beat.

TITUS
I urged our old acquaintance, and the
drops
That we have bled together. "Coriolanus"
He would not answer to, forbade all
names...

A long beat. They wait for him to go on.

Titus searches for the words to continue.

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TITUS
He was ... a kind of nothing.
(a difficult beat)
Titleless...
Till he had forged himself a name in the fire
Of burning Rome.

He has no more to say, his head drops.

Menenius begins to leave the room. The Tribunes stop him, leading him to a secluded corner:

SICINIUS
If you refuse your aid
In this--

BRUTUS
If you
Would be your country's pleader, your good tongue,
More than the instant army we can make,
Might stop our countryman.

MENENIUS
No, I'll not meddle.

SICINIUS
Pray you, go to him.

MENENIUS
What should I do?

Brutus stops him, with real emotion:

BRUTUS
Only make trial what your love can do
For Rome towards Martius.

MENENIUS
Well, and say that Martius
Return me, as Titus is returned,
Unheard - what then?

SICINIUS
Yet your good will
Must have that thanks from Rome.

Menenius thinks about it.

BRUTUS
You know the very road into his kindness,
And cannot lose your way.

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Menenius, despite all still a patriot at heart, decides.

MENENIUS
I'll undertake it ...
I think he'll hear me.

The Tribunes are relieved. Cominius nods and escorts Menenius out.

Brutus and Sicinius return to Titus.

TITUS
He'll never hear him.

SICINIUS
No?

TITUS
I tell you, he does sit in gold, his eye
Red as it would burn Rome.

EXT. CHECKPOINT-HIGHWAY - DAY

The Roman checkpoint on the desolate highway. A formidable military presence here now: soldiers, heavy weapons, tanks.

Volscian troops and a jeep can be seen down the highway.

We see Menenius' limousine pull up.

He and General Cominius climb out. Menenius is out of place in his trim business suit: a politician among soldiers.

Menenius steels himself then passes through the Roman checkpoint.

He walks down the highway toward the distant Volscian troops.

EXT. VOLSCIAN CAMP - DAY

Menenius is blindfolded, roughly pulled by two Volscian soldiers.

We hear some of the soldiers hooting at him. We stay close on Menenius' blindfolded face, sharing his feeling of disorientation and suspense.

The Volscians drag him into the abandoned factory--

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INT. ABANDONED FACTORY - DAY

Finally his guards stop him and pull off his blindfold--

Revealing--

Coriolanus. Transformed.

And terrifying.

He is no longer Roman. He is not Volscian. He is, as Titus said, “a kind of nothing.”

He sits in the barber chair. His head is completely shaved. His face is marked with martial face painting. These striking totemic markings also cover his scarred body.

He is primitive. Inhuman. Like a dragon.

The Angel of Death.

His young warrior Acolytes -- similarly shaved and painted -- are gathered around him; his personal bodyguard and cult.

A long beat as Menenius stares at his friend, stunned at the pagan metamorphosis.

Coriolanus just gazes back at him.

Menenius finally pulls himself together and approaches, with fulsome bravado:

MENENIUS
The glorious gods sit in hourly synod
about thy particular prosperity, and love
thee no worse than thy old friend
Menenius does! O Martius, Martius!

He steps forward to hug Coriolanus. Two of the Acolytes stop him. He can approach no further.

Menenius accepts this. No matter. He is completely confident he will be able to manipulate his protege. He always has in the past.

MENENIUS
Thou art preparing fire for us. Look
thee, here's water to quench it. I was
hardly moved to come to thee, but being
assured none but myself could move
thee, I have been blown out of your gates
with sighs, and conjure thee to pardon
Rome.

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A long beat.

Menenius waits for an answer. Grows uneasy.

Then...

CORIOLANUS
Away.

MENENIUS
How? ... Away?

CORIOLANUS
(ice)
Wife ... mother ... child ... I know not.
My affairs
Are servanted to others.

Menenius can't believe this cold response--

MENENIUS
Sir--

CORIOLANUS
Therefore be gone.

His frigid eyes slice into Menenius:

CORIOLANUS
Another word, Menenius,
I will not hear thee speak.

Menenius stares at him, shaken to the core.

The Guards pull Menenius away.

Coriolanus doesn't even glance at him.

EXT. CHECKPOINT-HIGHWAY - DAY

Back at the Roman checkpoint, Menenius strides toward his limousine. He has been deeply shaken by his interaction with the transformed Coriolanus.

General Cominius follows urgently, Menenius doesn't stop:

MENENIUS
This Martius is grown from man to dragon.
He has wings; he's more than a creeping
thing.

He stops at his limo.

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A beat.

He turns back to Cominius. We see the pain in Menenius' eyes.

MENENIUS
There is no more mercy in him than there is milk in a male tiger.

He climbs into his limo. Shuts the door.

The limousine drives off, sending up a cloud of dust that swirls around Cominius.

INT. MENENIUS' LIMO - DAY

Menenius sits in the back of his limo as it speeds back to Rome.

The rejection by Coriolanus has wounded him. Also he is plagued by guilt. He helped create this monster. He pushed Coriolanus into politics. And now Coriolanus has lost his soul, even his humanity, and Rome is to be put to the sword. All his fault.

This preys on him.

EXT. TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

Menenius' limousine pulls over by an isolated set of railroad tracks. Weeds springing up. Battered advertising posters. An old chain link fence.

Menenius climbs out of the car and walks along the tracks. Thinking.

He stops.

He sits on the railroad tracks.

Pulls out a little pocket knife and, in the Roman fashion, efficiently slits his wrists.

He stares out over the hideous landscape.

Blood begins to pool around his stylish shoes.

From afar we see him, sitting on the railroad tracks, alone and forlorn in this surreal urban wasteland, like a Samuel Beckett character.

He slumps over.

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Menenius is dead.

INT. ABANDONED FACTORY - SUNSET

The red glow of dusk is shining through the cracked and dusty windows.

Coriolanus, still in the barber chair, broods silently. Aufidius sits nearby, watching him.

The visit from Menenius is troubling Coriolanus.

CORIOLANUS
My partner in this action,
You must report to the Volscian lords how plainly
I have borne this business.

Aufidius is curiously formal in his response, the estrangement he feels toward Coriolanus growing:

AUFIDIUS
Only their ends
You have respected; stopped your ears against
The general suit of Rome; never admitted
A private whisper, no, not with such friends
That thought them sure of you.

CORIOLANUS
This last old man,
Whom with a cracked heart I have sent to Rome,
Loved me above the measure of a father.

Shouts and whistles from outside the factory draw their attention.

EXT. VOLSCIAN CAMP - SUNSET

Volumnia, Virgilia and Young Martius stride past the soldiers and mountains of military hardware. Volumnia leads, pulling the others by the hand.

Some of the soldiers whistle. Some spit. Others laugh and make lascivious noises. Many just watch with grim dislike.

Volumnia appears to be completely impervious to the whistles and cruel taunts. Her head is high, back straight, eagle eye forward. She was never more a Roman patrician.

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She is magnificent.

INT. ABANDONED FACTORY - SUNSET

Coriolanus stands as Volumnia, Virgilia and Young Martius are led into the factory.

He tries to register nothing, assuming a sort of glacial calm.

Volumnia and the others stop -- taking in Coriolanus' savage new demeanor and appearance -- taking in the Acolytes and pagan totems.

Volumnia just stands, peering sternly at her son. As if daring him not to crumble before her. He doesn't.

Aufidius watches everything closely.

It is Virgilia, finally, who bravely approaches:

VIRGILIA
My lord and husband--

He stop her, almost a warning, with:

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

VIRGILIA
The sorrow that delivers us thus changed Makes you think so.

CORIOLANUS
Best of my flesh,
Forgive my tyranny, but do not say
For that "Forgive our Romans."

She shows great courage. Stepping forward and kissing him deeply. A long kiss.

CORIOLANUS
O, a kiss ... Long as my exile, sweet as my revenge.

It is a perverse response. In his monomaniacal imagination, his wife's kiss is obsessively equated with his revenge on Rome.

He finally moves to Volumnia, simply can't resist her orbital pull.

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CORIOLANUS
You gods ... I prate,
And the most noble mother of the world
Leave unsaluted. Sink, my knee, in the
earth.

He kneels before her. It is done with a sense of duty and protocol, not affection.

VOLUMNIA
O, stand up blest.

He rises.

VOLUMNIA
Then with no softer cushion than the
flint
I kneel before thee.

She quickly and dramatically kneels before him. It is a coup de theatre and a masterpiece of manipulation.

CORIOLANUS
What is this?
Your knees to me? To your corrected son?

VOLUMNIA
Thou art my warrior;
I hope to frame thee.

She indicates Young Martius:

VOLUMNIA
This is a poor epitome of yours,
Which by the interpretation of full time
May show like all yourself.

CORIOLANUS
(to his son)
The god of soldiers,
Inform thy thoughts with nobleness, that
thou may prove
To shame invulnerable.

Volumnia pulls Young Martius down:

VOLUMNIA
Your knee, sir.

She pulls Virgilia down:

VOLUMNIA
Even he, your wife, and myself,
Are suitors to you.

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All three kneel before Coriolanus. A pitiable sight. But he has no pity.

He turns, sits in the barber chair.

CORIOLANUS
I beseech you, peace!
Or, if you'd ask, remember this:
Do not bid me dismiss my soldiers, or
capitulate
Again with Rome's mechanics. Tell me not
Wherein I seem unnatural. Desire not
To ally my rages and revenges with
Your colder reasons.

Volumnia stands, assuming again a position of strength.

VOLUMNIA
O, no more, no more!
You have said you will not grant us
anything,
For we have nothing else to ask but that
Which you deny already; yet we will ask,
That, if you fail in our request, the
blame
May hang upon your hardness. Therefore
hear us.

CORIOLANUS
Aufidius, and you Volsces, mark; for
we'll
Hear naught from Rome in private.
(coldly, to her)
Your request?

VOLUMNIA
Should we be silent and not speak, our
raiment
And state of bodies would reveal what
life
We have led since thy exile. Think with
thyself
How more unfortunate than all living
women
Are we come hither, since that thy sight,
which should
Make our eyes flow with joy, hearts dance
with comforts,
Constrains them weep and shake with fear
and sorrow,
Making the mother, wife, and child to see
The son, the husband and the father
tearing
His country's bowels out.

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Coriolanus' face is a study in aloof neutrality. Yet he is listening intensely and Volumnia's words are affecting.

She fights back emotion. It is impossible to tell if this real or feigned.

VOLUMNIA
For myself, son,
I propose not to wait on fortune till
These wars determine. If I cannot
persuade thee
Rather to show a noble grace, thou shalt
no sooner
March to assault thy country than to
Tread on thy mother's womb
That brought thee to this world.

VIRGILIA
(stands)
Ay, and mine,
That brought you forth this boy, to keep
your name
Living to time.

Young Martius stands as well and approaches his father, challenging and warlike:

YOUNG MARTIUS
You shall not tread on me.
I'll run away till I am bigger, but then
I'll fight!

Coriolanus stares at him -- the intensity of the boy's aggression is disturbing. And familiar.

CORIOLANUS
I have sat too long.

He rises and turns as if to go--

VOLUMNIA
Nay, go not from us thus!

Her command stops him. She appeals, quickly getting to the point of her argument:

VOLUMNIA
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 honor. No, our suit
Is that you reconcile them -- so the
Volsces
(MORE)

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VOLUMNIA (cont'd)
May say “This mercy we have showed,” 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!”

Coriolanus does not respond.

She softens...

VOLUMNIA
Speak to me, son...

Still he does not respond.

His emotions are roiling.

Still she is soft and vulnerable...

VOLUMNIA
Why dost not speak?

But softness is not a note she plays naturally. She knows it.

Her natural aggressiveness comes out, anger and outrage gradually boiling to the surface:

VOLUMNIA
Thinks thou it honorable 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 his mother, yet here he lets me prate
Like one in the stocks!

She is assaulting him now, on the attack:

VOLUMNIA
Thou hast never in thy life
Showed thy dear mother any courtesy,
When she, poor hen,
Has clucked thee to the wars and safely home
Loaded with honor. Say my request's unjust,
And spurn me back; and the gods will
(MORE)

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VOLUMNIA (cont'd)
plague thee,
That thou restrains from me the duty
which
To a mother's part belongs!

Coriolanus can take no more, turns and begins to walk away--

Volumnia reacts like lightning -- grabbing Virgilia and Young Martius and dragging them to the dirt with her--

VOLUMNIA
Down! Let us shame him with our knees!

She claws at the dirt -- like Hecuba -- keening -- a shocking explosion of raw emotion -- almost an incantation:

VOLUMNIA
Down! An end! This is the last. So we
will home to Rome,
And die among our neighbors. Nay, behold!
This boy, that cannot tell what he would
have
But kneels and holds up hands for
fellowship,
Does reason our petition with more
strength
Than thou hast to deny it.

She remains kneeling, panting for air.

Coriolanus looks at her. His noble mother. Clawing in the dirt like an animal. Filthy. Despairing. Her face wet with tears.

She looks back up at him. She senses she has failed.

It's over.

VOLUMNIA
Come, let us go.

She rises slowly, her age showing. Her spirit broken. Or seeming so.

She stares at Coriolanus as she rips off the Roman Eagle medal she wears and flings it to the ground.

The blood red sky of sunset behind her reflects her passion as she summons up all her strength for a lacerating and icy farewell:

VOLUMNIA
This fellow had a Volscian to his mother;
His wife is in Corioles and his child
(MORE)

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VOLUMNIA (cont'd)
Like him by chance ... Yet give us our dispatch.
I am hushed until our city be afire,
And then I'll speak a little.

She turns and begins to go.

But...

We see finally Coriolanus crack.

Like a great building crumbling.

Like fissures cutting across marble.

Emotion floods into him.

He lunges forward and grabs her hand. Volumnia stops.

Time stands still.

He doesn't speak.

Then:

CORIOLANUS
O mother ... mother...
What have you done?

He falls to his knees, clutching her hand.

CORIOLANUS
Behold, the heavens do ope,
The gods look down -- and this unnatural scene
They laugh at.

He buries his head in her, like a lost child:

CORIOLANUS
O my mother, mother! O!
You have won a happy victory for Rome;
But for your son - believe it, O believe it! -
Most dangerously you have with him prevailed ...
(he looks up at her deeply)
If not most mortal to him.

She looks down at him. His meaning, his foreshadowing, is clear: she has saved Rome, but he knows he is doomed. Rome will live. He will die. This is the price for her victory today.

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She is willing to pay that price. So is he.

A moment between them.

He accepts his destiny.

CORIOLANUS
But let it come.

He stands, regains his composure. He slowly walks to Aufidius.

He leans close, speaking intimately:

CORIOLANUS
Aufidius, though I cannot make true wars,
I'll frame convenient peace. Now, good
Aufidius,
Were you in my stead, would you have
heard
A mother less? Or granted less? ...
Aufidius?

AUFIDIUS
(carefully)
I was moved withal.

CORIOLANUS
I dare be sworn you were.
And, sir, it is no little thing to make
Mine eyes to sweat compassion. But, good
sir,
What peace you'll make, advise me.

We study Aufidius' face. He gives away nothing.

Coriolanus turns back to Volumnia. Looks at her.

She is victorious.

The crimson sky looms over her ominously.

And we go to...

INT. FORMAL MINISTRY HALL - DAY

A solemn peace treaty signing ceremony.

Coriolanus represents the Volscians. Cominius represents the Romans. They sit side-by-side at desks signing the treaty.

Volumnia and Virgilia, gorgeously dressed, are present. So too Brutus and Sicinius. The press films everything.

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It has the stiff formality of a White House ceremony.

Cominius concludes signing:

COMINIUS
A merrier day did never yet greet Rome,
No, not the expulsion of the Tarquins.
We have all
Great cause to give great thanks.

He looks to Volumnia.

COMINIUS
Behold our patroness, the life of Rome.

She is erect and exalted. “The Life of Rome” personified.

She ignores her son.

Coriolanus will not look at her.

EXT. TRUCK STOP - DAY

A rundown Truck Stop in an industrial wasteland.

Garish, buzzing neon. Filthy 18-wheelers refueling. Music droning from a radio.

Aufidius, his Lieutenant and seven of his men are waiting outside the dusty diner.

The men with Aufidius are thugs and killers, the most brutal Volsces he could find. We note a couple of Coriolanus' Acolytes among them. They have turned with great venom on their hero.

They are like a mafia hit squad, waiting for Coriolanus to return with the peace treaty.

Aufidius is deep in thought.

His Lieutenant breaks the silence:

LIEUTENANT
How is it with our general?

AUFIDIUS
As with a man by his own charity slain.

LIEUTENANT
Our soldiers will remain uncertain whilst
'Twixt you there's difference; but the
(MORE)

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LIEUTENANT (cont'd)
fall of either
Makes the survivor heir of all.

AUFIDIUS
I know it,
And my pretext to strike at him admits
A good construction.

A beat. He continues more to himself than them, almost convincing himself.

AUFIDIUS
I raised him, and I pawned
Mine honor for his truth; who being so heightened,
He watered his new plants with dews of flattery,
Seducing so my friends.
(bitterly)
At the last
I seemed his follower, not partner, and
He waged me with his countenance as if
I had been mercenary.

LIEUTENANT
So he did, my lord.
The army marveled at it; and in the last,
When he had carried Rome and that we looked
For no less spoil than glory--

Aufidius works himself into an intense, neurotic rage:

AUFIDIUS
There was it!
For which my sinews shall be stretched upon him.
At a few drops of women's rheum, which are
As cheap as lies, he sold the blood and labor
Of our great action -- Therefore shall he die,
And I'll renew me in his fall.

LIEUTENANT
Therefore, at your vantage,
Ere he express himself or move the people
With what he would say, let him feel your sword,
Which we will second.

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AUFIDIUS
(sees something)
Say no more.

In the distance they can see a Roman military truck approaching. Clouds of dust billow up.

They exchange a look. This is what they have been waiting for. They stand, stretch and prepare.

The truck stops across the highway from them and Coriolanus gets out. He holds a copy of the peace treaty in a leather portfolio. He is unarmed.

He stops.

He sees Aufidius and the thugs. Waiting for him. Like a death squad.

Coriolanus looks at them.

He knows exactly what's going to happen.

He is ready.

He nods and the truck drives off.

Coriolanus slowly crosses the highway to the truck stop, like a gunslinger walking down Main Street.

There is something new to Coriolanus here. A sort of acceptance. He knows his time is past.

Aufidius and the thugs go to meet him. The thugs spread out a bit, strategically, getting ready to strike. Coriolanus' experienced eyes miss none of this.

They meet in the parking lot.

CORIOLANUS
(to Aufidius)
I am returned your soldier,
No more infected with my country's love
Than when I parted hence, but still
subsisting
Under your great command.

He hands the treaty portfolio to Aufidius:

CORIOLANUS
We have made peace
With no less honor to the Volscians
Than shame to the Romans.

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AUFIDIUS
(handing the treaty to Lieutenant)
Read it not,
But tell the traitor, in the highest degree
He hath abused your powers.

Coriolanus is ready for Aufidius' ploy. He is amused at the obvious attempt to anger him:

CORIOLANUS
Traitor? How now?

AUFIDIUS
Ay, traitor, Martius.

CORIOLANUS
"Martius"?

AUFIDIUS
Ay, Martius, Caius Martius! Dost thou think
I'll grace thee with that robbery, thy stolen name
"Coriolanus"?

He spins to the others, making the case against Coriolanus with cutting bitterness:

AUFIDIUS
Perfidiously
He has betrayed your business and given up,
For certain drops of salt, your city Rome-
I say "your city" - to his wife and mother;
Breaking his oath and resolution, like
A twist of rotten silk; never admitting
Counsel of the war, but at his nurse's tears
He whined and roared away YOUR VICTORY!

Coriolanus tries to contain his anger:

CORIOLANUS
Hear'st thou, Mars?

AUFIDIUS
Name not the god, thou *boy of tears*.

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CORIOLANUS
Measureless liar, thou has made my heart
Too great for what contains it. "*Boy*"? O
slave.

Coriolanus' eyes miss nothing ... a Volscian thug shifting ... a bead of sweat on another ... one secretly reaching into his coat for a weapon.

Some of the Volscian thugs are clearly nervous.

Coriolanus is ready. He prepares himself mentally to die. He is acutely controlled:

CORIOLANUS
Cut me to pieces, Volsces.
Men and lads, stain all your edges on me.

It is a dare. A challenge.

CORIOLANUS
"*Boy*"? False hound.
If you have writ your annals true, 'tis
there
That, like an eagle in a dovecote, I
Fluttered your Volscians in Corioles.

His gaze burns into Aufidius:

CORIOLANUS
Alone I did it ... "*Boy*."

AUFIDIUS
Let him die for it.

At this command, his men move--

Aufidius steps back as--

The Volscian thugs attack--

With knives, machetes and tire irons--

Coriolanus fights bravely -- disarming two, grabbing their weapons, killing them, fighting back--

Slashing and cutting his way through the killers--

Closer and closer to Aufidius, who just watches--

Blood spattering and spraying--

But the thugs overpower Coriolanus, there are just too many--

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They stab him -- slicing with knives -- battering with chains and clubs -- finally emptying pistols him into him--

It is graceless and brutal carnage.

Slaughter.

But still he comes on. Body riddled with bullets and cut to bits. He refuses to fall. Like something immortal. An obscene demon of blood.

Finally the thugs move away.

Coriolanus still stands. Teetering. His face is a swollen mask of blood and gore. Blood flows from his body, pooling around his feet, spreading across the parking lot.

Aufidius steps forward.

What is left of Coriolanus glares at him through blood.

Aufidius slowly pulls his knife. The same knife he was sharpening so carefully at the opening of the story. It has finally found its purpose.

Coriolanus looks at him.

Then slowly ... Coriolanus tries to raise one bleeding arm ... this requires superhuman effort ... his slashed fingers clutch his shirt ... he rips it open ... exposing his breast.

Ready.

He locks eyes with Aufidius.

Aufidius steps to him. Takes his neck. Pulls him onto the knife. Driving it into him. Cradling his head like a lover.

They stand like this.

Then Coriolanus falls.

A pause.

AUFIDIUS
Take him up.

No one moves.

AUFIDIUS
Assist.

Abrupt cut to--

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EXT. TRUCK - DAY

Coriolanus' body is awkwardly tossed into the back of an open truck. Like a sack of potatoes.

EXT. TRUCK - SUNSET

A crowd of Volscians are gathered around the back of the truck. They have come to see Coriolanus' body.

We watch their faces. Normal people. A range of grim emotion.

One raises a cell phone. Takes a photo.

More phone cameras come out. Streaming video. Recording the moment.

INT. VILLA -- LIVING ROOM - DAY

On the TV:

The footage from the cell phone video.

Coriolanus' body in the back of the trunk.

Volumnia stands.

Looking at her son.

His body sprawled ungainly in death.

No ritual or ceremony. No honor.

Her face.

Snap to black.

The End.

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